Grandmaster Repertoire

Boris Avrukh

1.d4

VOLUME TWO



Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!

QUALITY CHESS

Grandmaster Repertoire 2

1.d4 - Volume Two

By

Boris Avrukh



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

First English edition 2010 by Quality Chess UK LLP

Copyright © 2010 Boris Avrukh

Grandmaster Repertoire 2 - 1.d4 volume two

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-906552-33-6

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Quality Chess UK LLP,
20 Balvie Road, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 7TA, United Kingdom
e-mail: info@qualitychess.co.uk
website: www.qualitychess.co.uk

Distributed in US and Canada by SCB Distributors, Gardena, California, US
www.scbdistributors.com
Distributed in Rest of the World by Quality Chess UK LLP through
Sunrise Handicrafts, Smyczkowa 4/98, 20-844 Lublin, Poland

Typeset: Jacob Aagaard
Proofreading: Andrew Greet, Colin McNab, Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw
Editing: Andrew Greet, Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw
Cover design: Adamson Design
Printed in Estonia by Tallinna Raamatutrükikoja LLC

Publisher's Foreword

Creating the Grandmaster Repertoire series seemed a natural idea. There is a glut of opening books at the *Starting Out* level. These books have certainly been refreshing, but they have almost completely replaced high-level opening books.

As chess fans, we felt we were missing out, and because we can, we decided to do something about it.

The books in the Grandmaster Repertoire series are written by grandmasters, edited by grandmasters, and will certainly be read by grandmasters. **This does not mean that players who are not grandmasters cannot read them**. We have worked hard to make our books clear in their presentation and to make it possible for the readers to decide the depth to which they want to study them.

When we were young and trying to be up-and-coming, we understood that you do not have to remember everything in an opening book in order to use it. It is our hope that those readers who find this repertoire too extensive and detailed, will ignore many of the details. Even now that we are grandmasters, we see the bolded moves as what we want to memorize, and the notes as explanations and illustrations.

It is our conviction that you will eventually be more successful by playing the main lines, simply because they are based on better moves. Instinctively most players know this, but they fear losing to a prepared line and thus turn to unambitious systems, or unhealthy surprises. The opponent will not be able to use his preparation but, sadly, will not need it. These sidelines generally end in uninspiring positions almost automatically.

Possibly the main reason why high-level opening books have disappeared is the rise of databases. It has been assumed that there is no point in having traditional opening books anymore, as you can look it all up in the database. Some rather lazy authors have a system: collect a few hundred games from the database, give Fritz a few moments, then hit Print. Such books add nothing to chess literature. We have seen enough of them and have never wanted to add to that pile.

In these days of multi-million game databases, we all have access to information, what is lacking is understanding. In the Grandmaster Repertoire series, very strong players will share their understanding and suggest strong new moves that are in no one else's database.

We are excited about this new series and hope that the reader will share some of that excitement.

John Shaw & Jacob Aagaard

Contents

	Key to symbols used & Bibliography	6
	Foreword by Grandmaster Boris Gelfand	7
	Bibliography	8
	Foreword by the Author	9
	The Bogo-Indian Defence	
1	4...c5	13
2	4...♗xd2†	19
3	4...a5	30
4	4...♕e7	36
	The Budapest Gambit	
5	Farajowicz Variation	59
6	Classical Variation	66
	Benoni Systems	
7	Catalan Benoni	92
8	Snake Benoni	102
9	Benoni without …♘f6	108
10	Reluctant Benoni	113
11	Czech Benoni	126
12	Old Benoni	144
13	Modern Benoni	164
14	Benko Gambit	201
	The Dutch Defence	
15	Stonewall Variation	221
16	Classical Variation	243
17	Leningrad Variation	262
18	St Petersburg Variation	289

The Grünfeld Defence

19 Dynamic Variation 297
20 Solid Variation 337

The King's Indian Defence

21 6...♗g4 367
22 6...♘c6 & 7...♗g4 370
23 6...♘c6 & 7...♗f5 379
24 6...♘c6 & 7...e5 387
25 6...♘c6 & 7...a6 400
26 6...♘c6 & 7...♖b8 414
27 6...c6 426
28 6...♘bd7 460
29 9...♕b6 491

The Modern Defence

30 Wade Defence 501
31 The Modern Defence 521

Minor Systems

32 2...b6 538
33 b-pawn Systems 542
34 English Defence 556
35 Black Knights Tango 572
36 Old Indian 578
37 Queen's Indian Attempt 587
38 Odd ideas 593

Index of Variations 601

Key to symbols used

⩲	White is slightly better
⩱	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+–	White has a decisive advantage
–+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
⩲	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
∞	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

Foreword

By Grandmaster Boris Gelfand

Every chessplayer, from club level to World Champion, comes up against the problem of choosing an opening repertoire. How are you to keep your bearings amid the ocean of information – when hundreds of thousands of games are played worldwide every year, and the standard databases contain millions of them? Where are you to find the compass enabling you to obtain a position that suits your taste?

Should you perhaps do what some renowned specialists advise, and abandon all thoughtful study of the opening phase – or put all your trust in analysis by computer programs?

The readers of this book have hit upon the best way out of the dilemma: the brilliant theoretician and profound analyst Boris Avrukh is sharing his recommendations with them, in all the closed openings. Mikhail Botvinnik and Viktor Korchnoi used to divide chessplayers into those who create opening theory and those who utilize the results of these labours.

Boris Avrukh belongs to the small number in the former category. I have played in the Israeli team together with Boris on several occasions, and could personally observe what encyclopaedic knowledge this exceptional player possesses. Grandmasters of the highest rank have fallen victim to his opening preparation.

I am convinced that this will become a constant reference book for a great many readers.

Boris Gelfand
World Championship Runner-Up 2007 and 2009 World Cup winner

Bibliography

Aagaard: *Stonewall II*, Quality Chess 2007.
Avrukh: *Grandmaster Repertoire 1: 1.d4 – Volume 1*, Quality Chess 2008.
Bogdanov: *Chess Explained: The Grünfeld*, Gambit 2009.
Bologan: *The King's Indian – A Complete Black Repertoire*, Chess Stars 2009.
Gutman: *Budapest Fajarowicz*, Batsford 2004.
Johnsen & Bern: *Win with the Stonewall Dutch*, Gambit 2009.
Kindermann: *Leningrad System*, Progress In Chess 2005.
Moskalenko: *The Fabulous Budapest Gambit*, New In Chess 2007.
Palliser: *The Modern Benoni Revealed*, Batsford 2005.
Palliser, Emms, Ward & Jones: *Dangerous Weapons: The Benoni and Benko*, Everyman Chess 2008.
Palliser, Flear & Dembo: *Dangerous Weapons: The King's Indian*, Everyman Chess 2009.
Palliser, Williams & Vigus: *Dangerous Weapons: The Dutch*, Everyman Chess 2009.
Pinski: *The Benko Gambit*, Quality Chess 2005.
Rowson: *Understanding the Grünfeld*, Gambit 1999.
Taylor: *The Budapest Gambit*, Everyman Chess 2009.
Watson: *Mastering the Chess Openings – Volume 2*, Gambit 2007.
Watson: *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*, Gambit 2001.

Periodicals
Chess Informant
Chess Today
New In Chess Magazine
New In Chess Yearbooks
Secrets of Opening Surprises
TWIC
MegaBase
Corr. Database

Foreword

By the Author

I would like to share my thoughts about the first volume of my 1.d4 Grandmaster Repertoire. First of all, I did not expect it to be such a great success. It is remarkable that I became a "chess celebrity" thanks to my book and not my chess achievements. As far as I know English, German and Italian editions have been published, and soon Spanish and Russian versions should appear. I am really grateful to Jacob Aagaard and John Shaw, who helped me greatly in every aspect that goes into making a high-level book.

It is incredible how many people have asked me when the second volume would be out. I have to admit that, thanks to my book, I became extremely popular on the Internet, where I provide chess lessons online – the number of my students increased drastically. I was also invited to hold a chess seminar in Germany (where it seems almost everybody has my book!) working on the subject "An Opening Repertoire for White". It was a successful event, judging by the feedback I received from the participants.

I am flattered that at every tournament I have played in since the first volume was published my colleagues have told me they admired my work. I would especially like to mention one case – at the last European Team Championship, which was held in Novi Sad, I was pleasantly surprised when Viktor Korchnoi came up to me and said that he was really impressed with the quality of the book. For me this was perhaps the most valuable opinion. I have enormous respect for Korchnoi, and I have heard he rarely hands out compliments to his colleagues! After his words I immediately remembered one of his "masterpieces". At the Dresden Interzonal tournament in 1998, Korchnoi lost a game with White against Smirin, where Ilya sacrificed a knight in his favourite King's Indian and launched a decisive attack. Korchnoi reacted with the following phrase: "You are really very good in the King's Indian" and then after a few seconds pause he continued with, "when your opponent is in time trouble!"

I would also like to share with you various opinions of other top Grandmasters. Shortly after a famous incident in Calcutta, Vlad Tkachiev travelled alone to Israel. He relaxed for ten days at a famous Dead Sea resort, disconnecting from everybody and just working on chess with the help of my book. In our conversations he praised it highly, but at the same time he pointed out some places that were unclear in his opinion. However, his main point was how much he liked the way I cover dubious lines and that now he does not need to work on them, or waste time during his preparation before a game.

A Top 10 player (who I should not name) pointed out that for him the most important detail when he judges a book is if it contains a single idea that is good enough to be worth him playing it. As I understand it, he believes my book had several interesting ideas! I also heard a remarkable opinion from another Top 10 player (again I do not have permission to name him) who claimed that my book was a "crime" against my colleagues, since now it is very easy for amateurs to pose problems against grandmasters! When I asked why my book was picked out as guilty from among thousands of opening books, he responded that other books were a waste of his time.

After quoting the elite, perhaps I should offer some advice for grandmasters of my level. Writing a book is a good chance to express yourself, to make your name better known, and at the same time, if the book is successful, it might be a good earner! Players of my level rarely receive big appearance fees, since we do not often get the opportunity to play in closed tournaments.

I usually play in Open tournaments or team events. I often talk to players who are surprised that an active chess player like me would be willing to reveal so many new ideas. Why not keep them secret until they can be sprung on an unwary opponent? First of all, I would never start working on a book if I intended to hide the most important details or recommend second-rate moves. Secondly, I believe that if you work seriously on the openings you can always find plenty of new ideas. I give away many novelties in this book and the previous one, but I am sure I can find more! I think this is one reason why we like our game – you can never hope to give a final conclusion, as there will always be some hidden resources.

To my great surprise, during my work on this book I managed to play some good chess, sharing 1st-2nd place in two big Opens (the Politiken Cup and the Zurich Jubilee). I won last round games against Malakhov and Morozevich respectively. The aim of this book is to help the readers' chess, and I hope it does, but it already seems to have helped mine!

Finally, I hope that I have managed to match the level of the first book, and that the reader will enjoy the second volume as much as the first.

How I selected the repertoire

The first volume of my 1.d4 GM Repertoire covered 1.d4 d5 openings, while this second one is going to deal with all the rest. I would like to explain how I chose which lines to recommend for White. I select serious variations and then analyse in depth, looking for improvements. I want the readers to have a repertoire that will last, so if there is a choice between two strong lines I choose the one where the theory is less likely to change on a daily basis. Moving on to specifics, I will say a few words about my choices against the main lines.

The King's Indian Defence

The biggest part of Volume 2 is dedicated to systems where Black fianchettoes his dark-squared bishop. The key decision for me was to choose the right system versus the King's Indian Defence. Here I simply followed my experience and feelings. A few years ago I said to myself: "Why should

I allow my opponent such good attacking chances in this opening?" (Actually this happened after I got mated several times, especially by Ilya Smirin!) "So why not secure my king by fianchettoing my light-squared bishop?" I started playing the Fianchetto Variation, scored well, and felt really comfortable in the opening part of the game.

The Grünfeld Defence

After choosing my line against the King's Indian it was easier to move forward. Obviously against the Grünfeld I was obliged to choose another fianchetto variation and I am not disappointed with my choice. I think the Grünfeld is a particularly tough opening to crack. For example, nowadays even the elite players mostly go for one-game-ideas against the Grünfeld.

The Modern Defence

I was a little restricted in my choice against the Modern Defence, as I could not recommend anything other than a fianchetto system, because of the possibility that otherwise we could face a transposition to a line of the King's Indian that is not part of our repertoire. Fortunately, the g3-system against the Modern is a serious weapon that leads to very rich play.

The Dutch Defence

Against all the various forms of the Dutch Defence, current theory considers a kingside fianchetto to be White's most reliable weapon. This fits with our repertoire style, so the objective merits and my taste both point towards the same lines.

The Benko Gambit

A similar situation arises when we face the Benko Gambit. Accepting the pawn, followed by a kingside fianchetto, is now considered to be White's most dangerous system. So it is also our system.

The Modern Benoni

The Modern Benoni is a particularly exciting part of this book. The fianchetto lines that I have analysed can lead to incredible complications and I suggest several key improvements. We should not worry about the complexity as, for example, I have a great score with the fianchetto system. In fact, since this line can arise via a Catalan move order we do not have much choice anyway.

In summary, I believe this book offers a strong and reliable repertoire. I hope my lines will serve the readers well.

Boris Avrukh
Beer-Sheva, 5th February 2010



Bogo-Indian

4...c5



Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 c5

5.♗xb4 cxb4 6.♗g2

A) 6...d5 14
B) 6...0–0 7.e4 d6 8.♘e2 15
B1) 8...♘c6 15
B2) 8...e5 9.a3 16
B21) 9...♘a6 17
B22) 9...♕b6 18

A) after 11...♖fd8



12.e4!N

B1) after 11...♘e7



12.♕d2!N

B21) after 13...♕b6

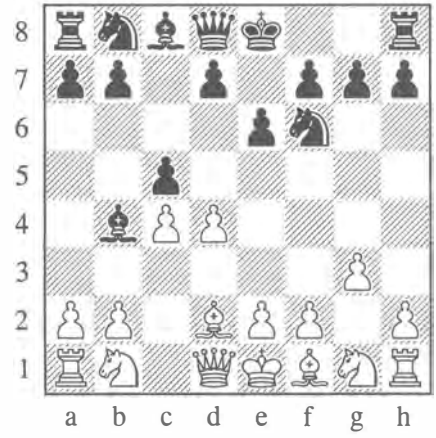


14.c5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4†

This is not the traditional Bogo-Indian Defence as White's knight has not yet emerged on f3. This is in general to White's advantage. Against a lot of lines White will play ♘f3 quite soon, but in some cases he will follow up with ♗g2 and e2-e4, taking advantage of the move order.

4.♗d2 c5



A thematic idea taken directly from the traditional Bogo-Indian. Black wants to delay taking on d2 and prepares to capture on d4 with the c-pawn. If he had taken on d2 and then played ...c7-c5, White would have d4-d5, but in this position this is less attractive, as either the pawn would be simply hanging, or White would have to take on b4 first, creating a square on c5 for Black. So, White is best off keeping things flexible in the centre, but without allowing Black to take on d4.

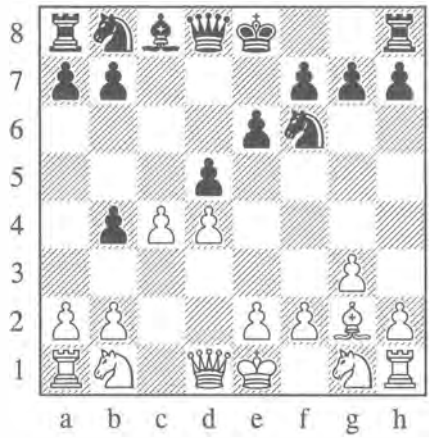
5.♗xb4

As always, this exchange is the critical test of Black's idea.

5...cxb4 6.♗g2

As mentioned in passing above, the main difference compared with other openings such as the main line Bogo-Indian or Queen's Indian, where Black employs the same ideas, is that White's knight is still on g1 and White has an extra option of playing e2-e4 at once, followed by developing his knight to e2.

A) 6...d5



This move is not the most common, as I have noticed that Black players often prefer to avoid playing the pawn to d5. It seems that now Black's pawn structure loses flexibility and White enjoys a pleasant edge. For instance:

7.♘d2 ♘c6 8.♘gf3 0–0 9.0–0 ♗d7

Another line runs:

9...b6 10.♖c1 ♗b7 11.e3 ♕d6 12.♕a4

White has very easy play, while Black lacks serious counterplay. It is no wonder that Black quickly lost the thread in the following encounter:

12...♖fc8 13.♖c2 ♖c7 14.♖fc1 ♖ac8 15.cxd5!

A well-timed decision.

15...exd5?

Black misses White's next idea.

The correct recapture was 15...♘xd5, although after 16.♘e1 White retains a pleasant edge; it feels as though White is playing with an extra pawn.

16.♗h3! ♘d7 17.♘e5

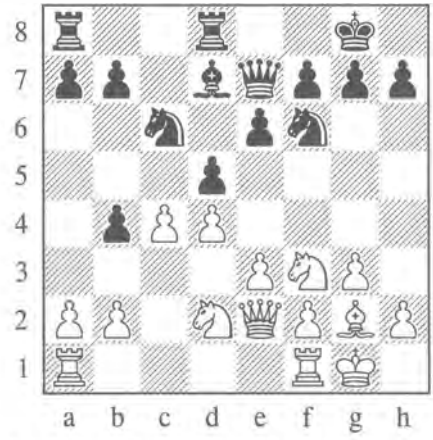
Black cannot avoid losing material, Ivanchuk – Gulko, New York 1988.

10.e3 ♕e7 11.♕e2

Also 11.♘e5 ♖fc8 12.♕e2 ♗e8 13.♖ac1 comes into consideration, with better chances for White.

11...♖fd8

This is Braun – Jojua, Batumi 2006. Commenting on this game in *ChessBase Magazine 115* Braun proposed the following improvement:



12.e4!N dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♗e8 14.♖ad1 ♖ac8 15.♖fe1

White has a clear positional advantage.

B) 6...0–0

A more flexible approach than the previous line, as Black can vary the destination of his d-pawn.

7.e4 d6

This is what is usually played, but in *Chess Informant 66* Beliavsky noted the following alternative for Black:

7...d5

Beliavsky's line looks convincing:

8.cxd5 exd5 9.e5 ♘e8 10.♘e2 ♘c6 11.0–0 ♘c7

If Black plays 11...♗g4 it can be comfortably met with 12.f3.

12.a3

Quite a natural idea, as White wants to gain the c3-square for his knight.

Also worthy of consideration was 12.♘d2. I examined the following approximate line: 12...♗g4 13.♘b3 f6 14.f3 ♗f5 15.f4 b6 16.♖c1 ♕d7 17.♘a1! A remarkable move: White's knight is heading for e3 via c2. White is better.

12...♗f5 13.axb4 ♘xb4 14.♘bc3

White has the advantage, thanks to his better pawn structure.

8.♘e2



At this point Black has two serious options, **B1) 8...♘c6** and **B2) 8...e5**.

B1) 8...♘c6

Seldom played. I developed this line:

9.a3 ♕b6

Instead 9...bxa3 10.♘xa3 ♕a5† 11.♕d2 is slightly better for White.

10.0–0 e5

I also examined the thematic:

10...a5 11.axb4 ♕xb4 12.♘a3

White's knight is heading for the weakened b5-square.

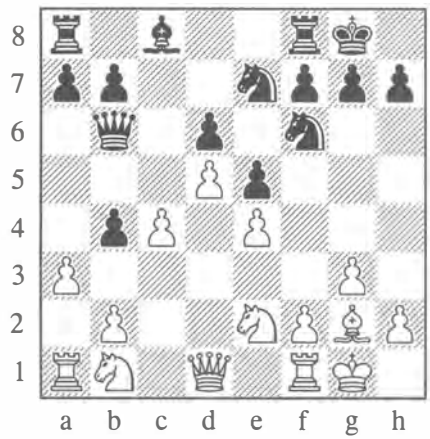
12...e5

Certainly Black cannot capture the b2-pawn: 12...♕xb2 13.♘b5 and Black's queen is in danger, for example 13...♖d8 14.♘f4 threatening ♘d3. 14...♘b4 15.♘d3 ♘xd3 16.♕xd3 Black is helpless against the threat of ♖fb1.

13.♘b5

With the better prospects for White.

11.d5 ♘e7



12.♕d2!N

I believe this is stronger than 12.axb4 ♕xb4 13.♕d2 ♕xc4 14.♖c1 ♕b3 15.♘a3 ♗g4, which led to unclear play in Prusikin – Laznicka, Steinbrunn 2005.

12...bxa3

Inferior is 12...b3 13.♕b4! when the b3-pawn is a sitting target.

13.♘xa3 a5

If Black tries 13...♗g4 then after 14.♘c1 ♖fc8 15.♘d3 ♕d4 16.♖fe1, followed by 17.b3 and 18.♘c2, White is clearly better.

14.c5!

This prevents Black from seizing control of the dark squares on the queenside (especially b4 and c5) which might happen after the natural 14.♘b5 ♗d7 15.♘ec3 ♗xb5 16.♘xb5 ♘d7, with reasonable play for Black.

14...♕xc5

Clearly bad is 14...dxc5? 15.♘c4 and Black's centre will be annihilated.

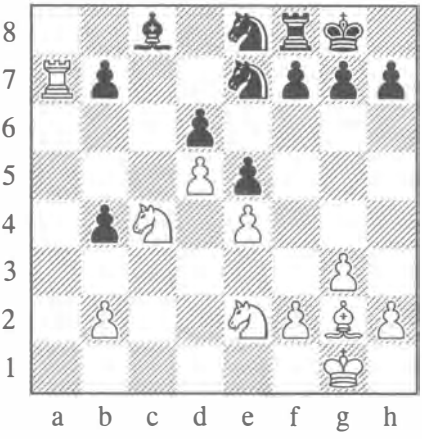
15.♖fc1 ♕b4 16.♕xb4 axb4 17.♘c4

Now the following consequences are essentially forced:

17...♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♘e8

Much worse is: 18...♖d8 19.♖a5! The idea is to transfer the rook to b5. 19...♘e8 20.♖b5 f5 21.♖xb4 fxe4 22.♘c3 With a clear edge.

19.♖a7



White obviously has the initiative and after:

19...f5 20.exf5 ♘xf5 21.♘b6 ♘f6 22.♖a4

White has an advantage.

B2) 8...e5

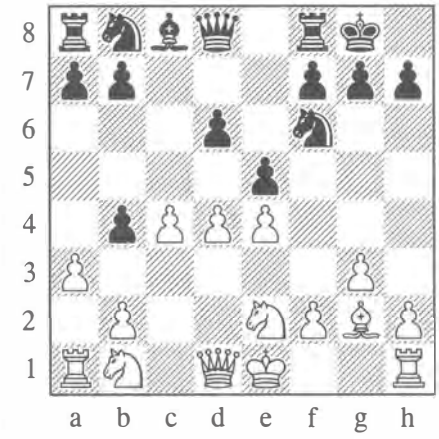
This is by far Black's main choice.

9.a3

I believe this is the most accurate move order for White.

In fact, 9.0–0 is generally considered to be the

main line, but I am slightly concerned about the position that might arise after: 9...♗g4 10.f3 ♗e6 11.♕d3 (or 11.b3 ♕b6 12.♔h1 a5) 11...♕b6 12.♔h1 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘bd7 14.b3 This was Coelho – Leitao, Santos 2008, and now 14...a5 would lead to double-edged play. Black's activity compensates for his damaged pawn structure.



After 9.a3 Black has two main replies: **B21) 9...♘a6** and **B22) 9...♕b6**.

Of only minor importance is:

9...bxa3 10.♘xa3 ♘c6 11.0–0

In my opinion this position is favourable for White, thanks to his extra space. Let's see a couple of illustrative continuations:

11...♕b6

11...♗g4 12.f3 ♗h5 I believe this is not the best place for Black's bishop; it was better to leave it on the h3-c8 diagonal. 13.♕d2 ♕b6 14.♖ad1 ♖ad8 15.♔h1 White had a positional advantage in Gleizerov – Bindrich, Stockholm 2006.

12.♕d2 a5

12...♘xd4 would lead to an inferior position for Black after 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♖fd1±.

13.♘b5 ♖d8 14.b3

14.♘ec3 was also very good.

14...♘b4 15.♘ec3±

White was clearly better in A. Horvath – Toth, Budapest 2006.

B21) 9...♘a6 10.axb4 ♘xb4 11.♕d2 a5 12.0–0 ♗e6!?

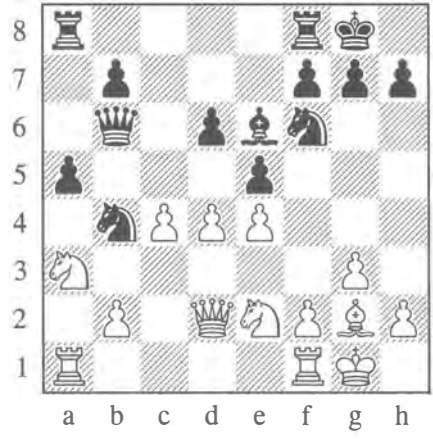
Black tries to create some counterplay by attacking the white centre. He would be happy to see d4-d5, weakening White's dark squares.

Passive tactics would not work well for Black, as was proven by the following encounter: 12...b6 13.♘a3 ♗a6 14.♖ad1 ♕e7 15.f4 ♖ac8 16.b3 ♖cd8 17.♘c3 White had an obvious advantage in Grischuk – Yemelin, Sochi 2004.

13.♘a3

An interesting alternative is 13.b3 ♕b6 14.♘bc3.

13...♕b6



14.c5!N

This is a strong improvement over 14.♘c3, which seems inaccurate, as it allows 14...exd4!N (14...♕xd4 15.♕xd4 exd4 16.♘cb5 d3 17.♘xd6 led to a favourable position for White in I. Porat – Ilincic, Budapest 2005) 15.♘a4 ♕c6 when I do not see how White can fight for an advantage.

14...dxc5 15.d5 ♖fd8

No better is 15...♗g4 16.f3 ♗h5, as White has the simple 17.g4 ♗g6 18.♘c4 ♕c7 19.d6

regaining the pawn and keeping a powerful position.

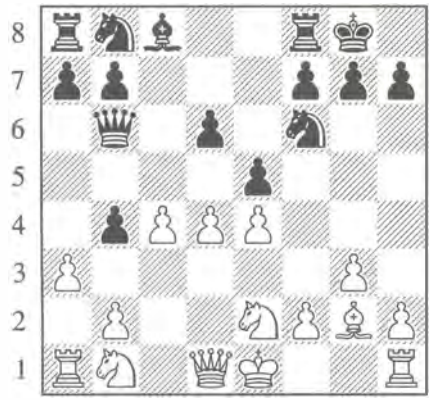
16.♘c4 ♕c7 17.♘c3

I definitely prefer this move to 17.f4 exf4 18.♘xf4 b5 with unnecessary complications. After the text move White has a clear advantage, as he is not only threatening to play ♕g5 regaining the pawn, but also the simple f2-f4 advance is very powerful, as I cannot imagine how Black can stop White's central pawns.

17...♗d7 18.f4

White is much better.

B22) 9...♕b6



10.0–0

After some thought I have concluded that this is the best move order.

10.♕d2

This looks nice at first, but the problem is that Black has a very unexpected resource for this type of pawn structure:

10...b3!

This makes White's c4-pawn vulnerable and allows Black sufficient counterplay:

11.♘bc3 ♘c6 12.♖d1

This position was reached in Iskusnyh – Maletin, Russia 2007, and now Black should have played:

12...exd4N 13.♘xd4 ♘e5 14.♘d5

Unfortunately White cannot play 14.♕e2 in view of 14...♗g4 15.f3 ♗d7 followed by ...♖ac8.

14...♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♗d7 16.0–0 ♖ac8

With double-edged play.

10...♖e8

The main point is 10...bxa3 11.♘xa3 ♕xb2? 12.♘b5 and Black is in trouble.

The serious alternative is: 10...♗g4 11.axb4 ♘c6 (11...♗xe2 12.♕xe2 exd4 runs into the strong 13.c5! dxc5 14.bxc5 ♕xc5 15.e5 ♘d5 16.♘d2 and White's light-squared bishop should make a difference) 12.f3 ♗e6 13.♘a3 exd4 14.♔h1 ♕xb4 15.♘xd4± White has a positional advantage.

11.axb4 ♕xb4 12.♘a3 ♗g4 13.f3 ♗d7 14.b3 a5 15.♕d3 ♘a6

Both sides gradually conclude their plans.

16.♖fc1 exd4

Probably Black should refrain from releasing the pressure in the centre. Now White consolidates his advantage.

17.♘c2 ♕b6 18.♕xd4 ♘c5 19.♖cb1 ♖a6 20.♘c3±

White had an edge in Avrukh – Kosashvili, Israeli League 2004.

Conclusion:

4...c5 leads to interesting positions, but White is better with accurate play. White benefits, compared to the main lines of the Bogo-Indian, from the increased flexibility caused by not having committed his king's knight to f3.





Bogo-Indian

4...♗xd2†

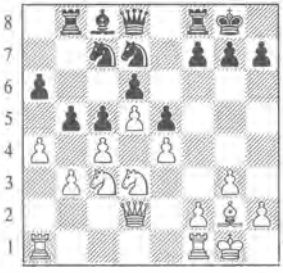
Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♗xd2†

5.♕xd2

A) 5...0–0 6.♗g2 d6 **20**
B) 5...d5 6.♘f3 0–0 7.♗g2 **21**
B1) 7...♕e7 8.0–0 **22**
B11) 8...dxc4 **22**
B12) 8...b6 **23**
B13) 8...♖d8 **24**
B2) 7...♘bd7 8.0–0 **25**
B21) 8...dxc4 **25**
B22) 8...♕e7 **26**
B23) 8...c6 **28**

A) after 15...♘d7



16.cxb5!N

B12) after 11...♕e6



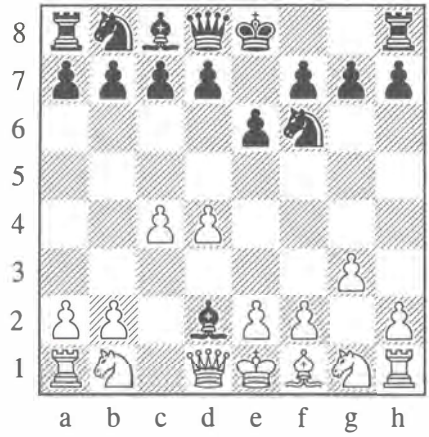
12.♕f4!?N

B23) note to 12...dxc4



17.♘b5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♗xd2†



5.♕xd2

After long hesitation I decided to make my choice in favour of recapturing with the queen. Of course the alternative is taking with the knight, and in this case I believe Black should opt for a typical Bogo-Indian pawn structure of d6 and e5 (although ...d7-d5 is a possible option). The main point is that with his knight on d2 White would be forced to close the position with d4-d5, as he cannot hold the d4-square.

I do not see any point in going deeply into this line, but I would like to show one critical continuation: 5.♘xd2 ♘c6 6.♘gf3 d6 7.e4 e5 8.d5 ♘b8 9.♗g2 0–0 10.0–0 a5 11.♘e1 ♘a6 12.♘d3 ♕e7 Finally, via a different move order, the players reached an important theoretical tabiya. I assume Black could try to play without the move ...♕e7 (perhaps with 12...c6!?). 13.a3 One of many possibilities for White. 13...♗g4 14.f3 ♗d7 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 c6 The position was unclear in Rogozenko – Parligras, Hamburg 2008.

After the queen recaptures, the two main options are: **A) 5...0–0** and **B) 5...d5**.

A) 5...0–0 6.♗g2 d6

Now I suggest a very natural continuation:

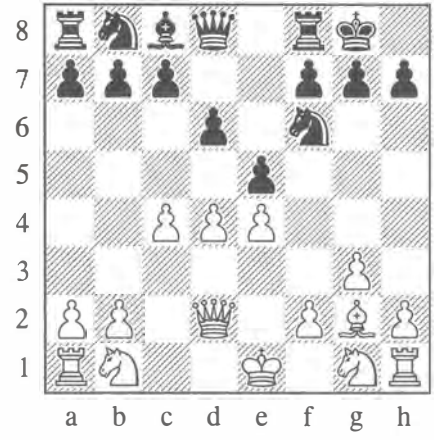
7.e4

To my great surprise this interesting try has only appeared three times in practice. In my opinion it is very logical to benefit from not having our kingside knight on f3, and to advance quickly with e2-e4 followed by ♘e2. However, almost everyone seems to play either 7.♘f3 or 7.♘c3.

7...e5

The following line illustrates the value of White's set-up: 7...d5 This is obviously met by 8.e5 ♘e4 and now I believe White can try to win a pawn with 9.♗xe4 dxe4 10.♘c3, not fearing 10...b6 11.♘xe4 ♗b7 12.f3. White will continue with 0–0–0 and ♘e2. I do not see anything special for Black.

7...c5 might be a good option for Black if it were not for 8.dxc5! dxc5 9.e5 ♘fd7 (or 9...♕xd2† 10.♘xd2 ♘g4 11.f4±) 10.f4 and White enjoys a pleasant space advantage.



8.♘e2!?N

This is my new idea. There is no point in clarifying the pawn structure in the centre, as this would allow Black easy play. For example, 8.d5 c6 9.♘c3 cxd5 10.cxd5 ♘a6 11.♘ge2 ♗d7 12.0–0 b5 and Black developed promising play on the queenside in Robatsch – Lehmann, Malaga 1964.

The main point of this novelty is its flexibility. If the centre is closed by d4-d5 White will be able to push f2-f4 at once. Also, he need not worry about a possible ...♗g4, which usually puts additional pressure on White's centre if he has developed his kingside knight to f3. Now this move would be nonsensical, as we can simply play f2-f3. This position has never been tested in practice, but I have worked out a few possible lines:

8...c5

If 8...♘c6 9.♘bc3 and White enjoys a stable edge, as I fail to see how Black can create any decent counterplay.

9.d5 ♘a6

Naturally Black starts to prepare the thematic ...b7-b5 advance.

10.♘bc3 ♘c7

We have transposed to the Damljanovic game that is quoted below.

11.0–0 ♖b8 12.a4 b6 13.♘c1

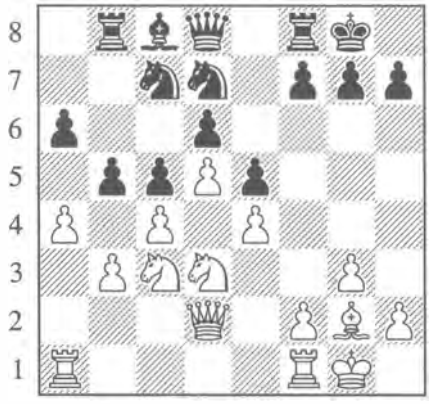
Of course White could have played the immediate f2-f4, but it is very useful first to improve the e2-knight.

13...a6 14.♘d3 b5 15.b3!

It may look quite attractive to play 15.cxb5 axb5 16.b4, but it appears that Black has a fine defensive resource: 16...c4 17.♘b2 bxa4 18.♘cxa4 White will have nothing special if Black manages to exchange all the queenside pawns. 18...c3! 19.♕xc3 ♘b5 20.♕d2 ♘d4 Black has plenty of counterplay for his sacrificed pawn.

15...♘d7

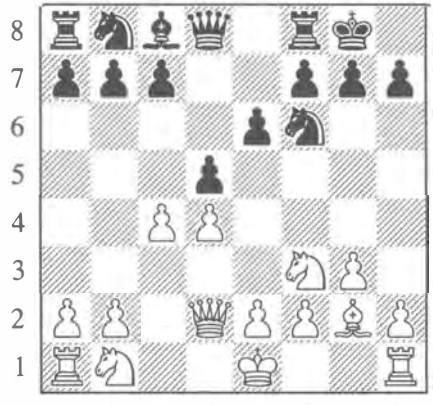
So far this is Damljanovic – P. Popovic, Cacak 1995, but now that Black's knight is on d7, it is a good moment to carry out the plan mentioned in the previous note.



16.cxb5!N axb5 17.b4 c4 18.♘b2

White has a positional advantage.

B) 5...d5 6.♘f3 0–0 7.♗g2



This is an important tabiya. Black usually plays either **B1) 7...♕e7** or **B2) 7...♘bd7**, both of which lead to solid but inferior positions, as we shall see. But besides these main options, there are a few other interesting moves to consider:

7...b6

This leads to a typical Queen's Indian type of position, but the absence of dark-squared bishops gives White a pleasant advantage. White now has a few promising avenues, but I like the following example best of all:

8.cxd5 exd5 9.0–0 ♗b7 10.♘c3 ♘bd7 11.♖ac1 ♖e8 12.♖fd1 a6

Black refrains from 12...c5 and indeed after 13.♘h4 c4 (otherwise it is not clear how to hold the d5-pawn, as 13...♘e4 runs into the strong 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♘f5!) 14.b3 cxb3 15.axb3 White has a positional advantage.

13.♕c2 ♘f8 14.b4 ♕e7 15.♕b3 ♘e6 16.e3

White enjoyed a small but stable positional edge in Beliavsky – Kasimdzhanov, Pune 2004.

7...dxc4

This is a quite playable idea for Black.

8.♘a3 ♗d7

The point. Black's light-squared bishop transfers to the h1-a8 diagonal, neutralizing White's Catalan bishop.

Clearly worse was 8...c5 9.dxc5 ♘e4 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♘xc4 ♘c6 12.0–0 ♘xc5 and now in the game Lupor – Klundt, Bad Wiessee 2000, White could have gained an advantage by simple means with 13.♖fd1 ♗d7 14.♘d6 with serious pressure.

9.♘xc4 ♗c6 10.0–0

I believe White's extra space guarantees him a slight advantage.

10...♘bd7

10...♗d5 was recommended by Vlatko Kovacevic in *Chess Informant 45*. In this case White should continue with 11.♖ac1 ♘c6 12.♖fd1 ♘e4 13.♕c2, retaining the better chances.

11.♖fc1 ♗d5 12.b4

Gaining more space on the queenside; the following encounter proves that Black is far from equality:

12...♕e7 13.♕b2 ♖ac8 14.♘a5 ♘b8 15.♘e5 ♗xg2 16.♔xg2

White was significantly better in Portisch – P. Nikolic, Linares 1988.

7...c6 8.0–0 ♘bd7 does not have independent value, as it transposes to 7...♘bd7.

B1) 7...♕e7

This move and all the various set-ups it leads to were quite popular in the 1980s.

8.0–0



Once again we have reached a branching point. The three main moves here are: **B11) 8...dxc4**, **B12) 8...b6** and **B13) 8...♖d8**. However, the most popular move is probably 8...♘bd7, but this move is covered by transposition in line B22 below.

B11) 8...dxc4

This always seems to me to be a concession, as it strengthens the power of White's light-squared bishop.

9.♘a3 ♖d8

The alternative is:

9...c5

Here the following example looks rather convincing.

10.dxc5 ♕xc5 11.♖ac1 ♘c6 12.♘xc4 ♖d8 13.♕g5

13.♕f4!? might be an interesting alternative.

13...♕xg5 14.♘xg5 ♘d4

This position was reached in Aronian – Huebner, Internet (blitz) 2004. Now White should have played:

15.♖fd1 h6

15...♘xe2†? fails to 16.♔f1 ♘d4 17.♘e5 with a decisive advantage.

16.e3! hxg5 17.♖xd4 ♖xd4 18.exd4 ♘e8

Otherwise 19.♘d6 is very unpleasant.

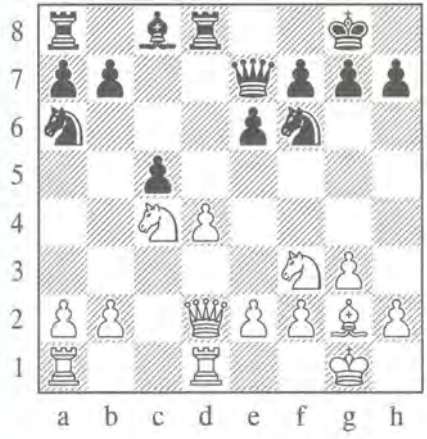
19.♖c3

It is clear that White has a strong initiative.

10.♘xc4 c5 11.♖fd1 ♘a6

I also checked the natural 11...♘c6 and in this case 12.♕e3 ♘d5 13.♕b3 would keep serious pressure.

All this was played in Speelman – Andersson, London 1982. Now White should have continued:



12.♘ce5!N

I examined the following line:

12...♗d7 13.♘xd7 ♖xd7 14.♕a5 ♖ad8 15.e3±

With a pleasant edge.

B12) 8...b6

Black always has this. This position would also be likely to arise via the 7...b6 move order.

9.cxd5 exd5 10.♘c3 ♗b7 11.♘h4

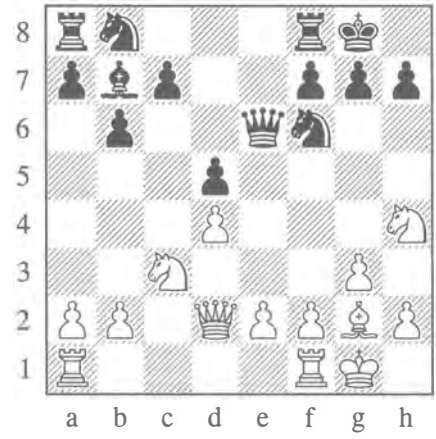
I like this move, as it underlines that Black's queen is slightly misplaced on e7.

11...♕e6

This seems to be Black's best option, but let's see why the other moves are weaker:

11...♖d8 was played in Adianto – Tukmakov, Biel 1997. For some reason White refrained from the natural 12.♘f5!, which would have been very strong. Black would have been obliged to choose between the passive 12...♕f8 13.♕f4 ♘a6 14.♖ac1, when White's position looks very promising, and the even worse 12...♕e6, which can be strongly met with 13.♕g5 g6 14.e4!, and Black is in serious trouble.

11...♘e4? is even worse. After 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.♘f5 ♕d8 14.d5! Black lost his central pawn in Cvitan – Franic, Pula 1998.



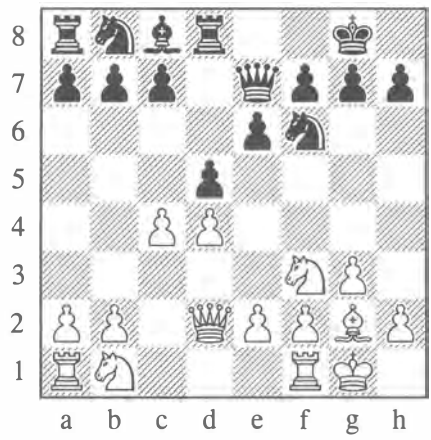
12.♕f4!?N

This is stronger than 12.♕g5 g6 13.♕e5 ♕xe5 14.dxe5 ♘e4 when Black had a reliable position in Arencibia – Gonzalez Garcia, Yucatan 1999.

12...♘a6 13.♖fd1

White has many moves that will improve his position (such as ♖ac1, a2-a3 and b2-b4) and Black must also watch out for a ♘f5 jump. I believe White's chances are preferable.

B13) 8...♖d8



9.♖c1

More popular is 9.♕c2, but in my opinion our queen is not so badly placed on d2 and might be transferred to the f4- or e3-squares, and especially after 8...♖d8, this idea works fine for White.

9...c6

Black has also tried another set-up with 9...♘c6. Now I like the following plan for White: 10.♘e5 ♗d7 11.♕e3 ♗e8 12.♘d2± White had a preferable position in Su. Polgar – Garcia Trobat, San Sebastian 1991.

10.♕e3

This is a good square for White's queen, where it controls the important central squares of e4 and e5, and vacates the d2-square for the development of the b1-knight.

10...♗d7

Releasing the tension in the centre is hardly a good idea:

10...dxc4 11.♖xc4 ♘bd7 12.♕a3!?

An interesting idea, but the natural 12.♘bd2 ♘d5 13.♕e4 would also have kept a pleasant edge.

12...♔f8 13.♖c1 ♕xa3 14.♘xa3

The endgame is already clearly favourable for White and he managed to increase his advantage with the next series of moves: 14...♘e4 15.♘c4 f6 16.♘e1 ♘g5 17.a4 ♘b6 18.a5 ♘d5 19.♘d3± White was clearly better in Boensch – Kveinys, Augsburg 1994.

11.♘bd2 ♗e8 12.♘b3

A remarkable concept; White's knight is heading for a5, where it will put additional pressure on Black's queenside. A worthy alternative is 12.a3 a5 13.c5 a4 14.♘e5± as in Timman – P. Nikolic, Reykjavik 1988.



12...♘bd7

Other options for Black are:

12...♘a6 13.a3 ♖ac8 This position was reached in Razuvaev – Kholmov, Moscow 1991, and now Kholmov's recommendation in *Chess Informant* 52 seems very good for White: 14.c5! White's chances are better, as he has a clear plan of a queenside offensive (♘a5, b2-b4, a3-a4 and so on), while it will not be easy for Black to create counterplay in the centre.

12...a5 13.♘c5 ♘a6 14.♘d3± is a line given by Kasparov in *Chess Informant 48*.

13.♘a5 ♖ab8 14.♖ab1

Simply preparing the b2-b4 advance.

14...♖dc8

14...♘f8 15.c5 ♘g6 16.b4 would leave White with a pleasant edge.

15.cxd5

We are following a Kasparov game, and as always he takes a concrete approach to the position. The alternative would have been 15.c5!? with a slightly better position for White, as he has a clear offensive plan on the queenside.

15...♘xd5

15...cxd5 would leave Black a pawn down with questionable compensation after: 16.♖xc8 ♖xc8 17.♘xb7 ♕b4 18.♕b3 ♕xb3 19.axb3±

16.♕d2 c5?!

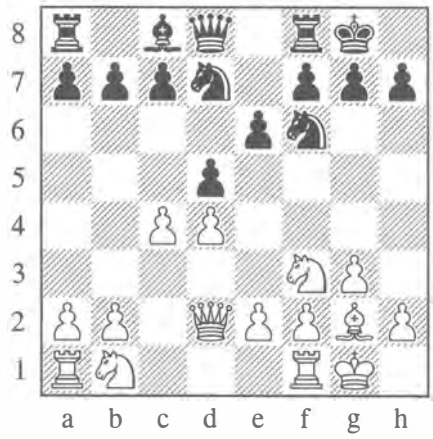
This move was condemned by Kasparov. In *Chess Informant 48*, he recommended 16...♘5b6 as the road to equality, but I would like to disagree with this evaluation. After 17.b4 f6 18.e4 e5 19.a3 ♗f7 20.♕e3 White seems better to me.

17.e4 ♘5b6 18.e5!



White seized the initiative in Kasparov – Timman, Belgrade 1989.

B2) 7...♘bd7 8.0–0



Once again we have to deal with a branch in the road. The three moves we cover here are **B21) 8...dxc4**, **B22) 8...♕e7** and **B23) 8...c6**.

8...b6 is also possible, but White should react with 9.cxd5 exd5 10.♘c3 ♗b7, when we reach a position from the 7...b6-line, which has been examined on page 22.

B21) 8...dxc4

Here I have come up with a novelty:

9.a4!?N

The main point of Black's idea is that he meets 9.♘a3 with 9...e5!. Now the critical line is: 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♕xd8 (after 11.♕c3 ♘xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♕e7 13.♘xc4 c6 Black achieves a perfectly playable position) 11...♘xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♖xd8 13.♖fd1 (or 13.♘xc4 ♗e6) 13...♗e6! Black was alright in Timman – Schebler, Antwerp 2008.

9...c5

I also analysed two other options:

9...b6

This does not solve Black's problems. For example:

10.♘e5 ♘d5 11.♘xc4 ♗a6 12.♘ba3 c5 13.e4 ♘b4 14.e5 ♘d5 15.♘b5

White has serious pressure.

9...♕e7 10.♘a3 e5 11.♘xc4

Instead 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♕xe5 13.♘xc4 ♕e7 is not much for White, even though he managed to win a tempo with ♘xc4.

11...e4

If 11...exd4 12.♘xd4 and White's pressure is annoying.

12.♘fe5 ♘b6 13.♘e3

I decided to focus on this move, even though White has other ways of fighting for an advantage.

13...♗e6

If 13...c5 14.dxc5 ♕xc5 15.a5! ♕xe5 16.axb6 a6 17.♖a5 and White keeps some pressure.

Also after 13...a5 14.♕c2 c6 15.♕c5 ♕xc5 16.dxc5 ♘bd7 17.♘xd7 ♗xd7 18.♘c4± White retains a pleasant advantage.

14.a5 ♘bd5 15.a6 b6 16.♘c6 ♕d6 17.♖fc1 ♘xe3 18.♕xe3 ♗d5 19.♕a3!±

White definitely has pressure, thanks to his strong knight on c6.

10.♖d1

The text move is best as 10.♘a3 allows Black to comfortably develop his light-squared bishop with 10...b6 because 11.♘e5 is now met strongly with the exchange sacrifice 11...♘xe5! 12.♗xa8 cxd4, leading to double-edged play.

10...♕e7

White was ready to meet 10...b6 with: 11.♘e5 ♘d5 12.e4 ♘5f6 (It is an important point that Black cannot play 12...♘xe5? because of 13.dxe5. Here we can see the point of 10.♖d1, as Black's queen is hanging on d8.) 13.♘xc4 ♗a6 14.♘ba3 cxd4 15.♕xd4 White is better.

11.♘a3 cxd4 12.♕xd4

Black would have no problems after 12.♘xd4 ♘c5 13.♕b4 e5.

12...e5

Now White must find an accurate move.

13.♕c3!

This is a key point, as 13.♕xc4 ♘b6 does not pose Black any problems.

13...e4 14.♘d4 ♘c5

Also after 14...♘e5 15.♘xc4 ♘xc4 16.♕xc4 White is slightly better.

15.♘xc4 ♗d7 16.♕b4

White has an edge. It is important to mention the problem with the following natural try:

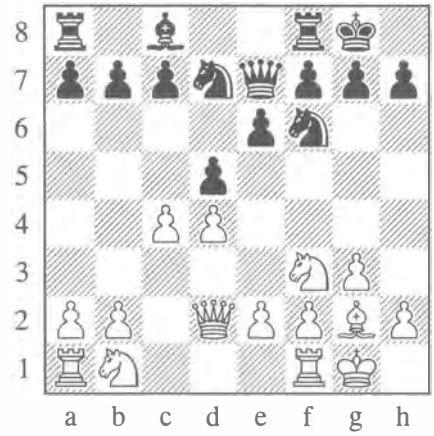
16...♘d5 17.♘f5!

This appealing move forces the following sequence.

17...♘xb4 18.♘xe7† ♔h8 19.♘d6

White's advantage is indisputable.

B22) 8...♕e7



9.♕c2

This time we choose a different plan. As we already know, White can leave his queen on d2 and continue with 9.♖c1, but I failed to discover anything special for White after 9...c6. Black has very easy play: after both 10.♕f4 and 10.♕e3 his plan includes ...b7-b6, ...♗b7 or ...♗a6 and then eventually to carry

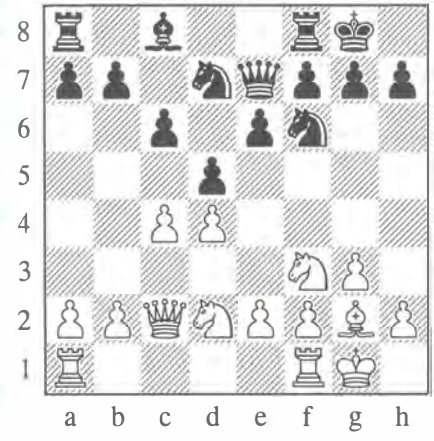
out ...c6-c5. I did not manage to find any ideas that pose Black problems.

9...c6

The most playable alternative is 9...c5, but this seems to me to be absolutely not in the spirit of this variation. White gains the better chances by simple means: 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘c3 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘f6 And now in the game Gordenko – Semenov, Kiev 2006, White could have seized an advantage with 14.♖ac1 e5 15.♘b3 e4 16.♕c7.

10.♘bd2

White intends to execute the e2-e4 advance. Black has two options: either allow White to carry out his idea, or play 10...e5 himself.



10...e5

10...b6 11.e4

This position has occurred only twice in tournament practice and both games continued:

11...dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♗b7

In the other game Black tried 12...♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♗b7 and now after the best reply, 14.♖fe1, we reach the same position as after 12...♗b7.

13.♖fe1 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4



I have developed and used a method of evaluating this type of Catalan position: if Black manages to carry out the programmed ...c6-c5 advance (then exchanges on d4 or forces White to capture on c5) then in most cases Black is alright, but if White succeeds in blocking the c6-pawn by playing c4-c5, or can meet the ...c6-c5-advance with d4-d5, then White can fight for the advantage. In this position we have the second case and White has chances of an advantage.

14...♘f6

Here a draw was agreed in Vera Gonzalez – Nogueiras Santiago, Matanzas 1994, but objectively White could pose Black definite problems.

15.♕c2 ♖ad8

If 15...c5 then White plays 16.d5 and is simply better.

16.c5!

Black is still far from equalizing.

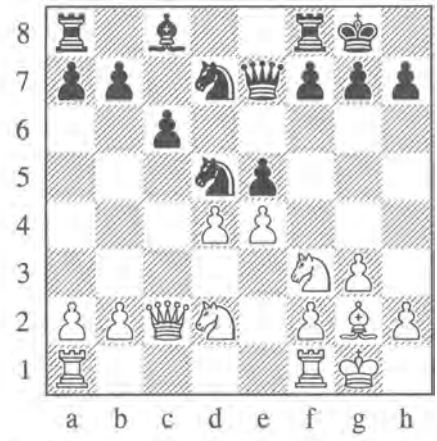
11.cxd5 ♘xd5

Nobody has tried 11...cxd5, which would offer White a pleasant choice: 12.e4!? (or 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.♘f3 with nice play against the isolated pawn) 12...dxe4 (if 12...exd4 then 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♖fe1 ♕c5 15.♕xc5 ♘xc5 16.♘xd4 with definite pressure) 13.♘xe4 exd4 14.♖fe1 White would regain the pawn and have lasting pressure.

It is essential to note that 11...e4? would be a serious mistake in view of 12.d6! ♕e6 13.♘g5 ♕xd6 14.e3! and Black loses his central pawn.

12.e4

Now Black has three options:



12...♘5b6

The two other options are:

12...♘b4 13.♕c3 exd4 14.♘xd4 c5? In this case it is really not a good idea to move the c-pawn. (Correct would have been 14...♘b6 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♖ac1± and White is slightly better.) 15.♘f5 ♕e5 16.♘c4± White was clearly better in Plaskett – Hund, London 1982.

12...♘5f6 13.♖fe1 ♖d8

If 13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♕c5 15.♕xc5 ♘xc5 16.♘c4, then the endgame is unpleasant for Black.

14.♖ad1

White naturally enjoys a space advantage, but Black's position is quite sound. We are following a Karpov game and it is really remarkable how the ex-World Champion handles this position with White.

14...exd4 15.♘xd4 ♘b6 16.♘2b3 ♗g4 17.f3 ♗e6 18.♕c5

I would also consider 18.♘xe6 ♕xe6 19.♘c5 ♕e7 20.f4 with the better chances, but Karpov prefers to keep more tension.

18...♕e8 19.e5 ♘fd7

19...♘fd5 20.f4 looks much better for White.

20.♕c1 ♘f8 21.f4

White had the upper hand in Karpov – Andersson, Reykjavik 1991.

13.♖ac1!?N

This new move was recommended by Pelletier in *ChessBase Magazine 124*.

It is important for White to keep control over the c5-square, thus preventing Black's idea of a later ...♕c5 trying to swap queens, as happened in the following encounter: 13.♖fe1 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♕c5 15.♕xc5 ♘xc5 The arising endgame appeared reliable for Black in Pelletier – Schebler, Bundesliga 2008.

I examined the following natural line:

13...♖d8 14.♘b3 exd4 15.♘fxd4 ♘e5

Or 15...♘f8 16.♖fe1 and White sets the tone.

16.f4 ♘ec4 17.♕e2 ♘a5 18.♕f2 ♘xb3 19.♘xb3±

B23) 8...c6 9.♘e5

This has only been played twice, but it seems the most promising continuation. Usually White chooses between 9.♖c1 and 9.♕c2, but in these lines I failed to discover many promising ideas for White; in general Black has very easy play with ...b7-b6, ...♗b7, ...♕e7 and then ...c6-c5 at the right moment.

9...♘xe5

It is understandable that in both games Black went for this knight swap, as he could not execute his usual plan of fianchettoing his bishop.

10.dxe5 ♘d7 11.f4 ♘b6 12.♘a3



12...dxc4

This capture seems to me to be a principled approach, as otherwise Black may struggle to find any play. Let's follow a grandmaster game to see what might happen if Black does not take on c4:

12...♕e7 13.♖ac1 ♖d8 14.♖fd1 ♗d7 15.c5

White decides to remove the tension in the centre and rightly so, as Black is now doomed to passivity.

15...♘c8 16.e4 b6

Obviously Black is seeking counter-chances. This position was reached in Dorfman – Spassky, France 2003, and now White missed a beautiful tactical solution:

17.♘b5!N ♗e8

Black can try to accept the knight sacrifice with 17...cxb5, but after 18.exd5 ♗c6 (18...exd5 19.♕xd5 ♖b8 20.c6 is very bad for Black) 19.cxb6 Black has to give back the piece. Black then has two options, but they are both bad: 19...♘xb6 20.♖xc6 ♘xd5 21.♕c1 or 19...♗xd5 20.♖c7 ♕e8 21.b7 ♖b8 22.bxc8=♕ ♖bxc8 23.♖xc8 ♖xc8 24.♗xd5 ♖d8 25.♕g2 ♕d7 26.♕h3! (a very important resource, as now White is threatening 27.♗f3) 26...exd5 27.♕xd7 ♖xd7 28.♔f2± The rook endgame is difficult for Black, as White obviously has pressure.

If Black takes the c5-pawn then White has a simple but pleasing manoeuvre to switch his knight to a dominant post: 17...bxc5 18.♘c7 ♖b8 19.♘a6 ♖b6 20.♘xc5± With a clear positional advantage for White.

18.exd5 exd5

18...cxd5 19.c6 is hardly playable for Black.

19.cxb6 axb6 20.♘d4 ♘a7 21.♖e1!

White's idea is to push the f-pawn; his advantage is obvious.

13.♖fd1 ♕xd2 14.♖xd2 ♗d7 15.♘xc4!?N

I think this is White's best chance.

A few years ago I opted for 15.♖ad1 ♖fd8 16.e4 ♔f8 17.♗f1, but after 17...♔e7 18.♗xc4 ♗e8 Black was not worse in Avrukh – Khetsuriani, Athens 2005.

I also examined 15.♖c1 ♖fd8 16.♘xc4, but it is hard to believe White can hope for anything serious after 16...♘xc4 17.♖xc4 ♔f8 18.♔f2 ♔e7 19.♖b4 ♖ab8 20.♖d6 ♗e8 21.♖bd4 f6!.

15...♘xc4 16.♖xd7 ♖ab8 17.♖ad1±

White retains a pleasant edge.

Conclusion:

Black's exchange on d2 is not very popular nowadays, despite being quite a reliable option. Still, it seems that White retains the better chances everywhere, with the help of some improvements.



Bogo-Indian



4...a5

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 a5

5.♗g2

A) 5...d6 **31**
B) 5...0–0 **31**
C) 5...d5 6.♘f3 0–0 7.0–0 **32**
C1) 7...c6 **33**
C2) 7...♘c6 **33**

A) after 8...e5



9.♘bc3!?N

C1) after 10...♗b7



11.e4!N

C2) note to 8...dxc4



11.a3!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 a5

This is the typical Bogo-Indian reaction. Black wants to keep his bishop on b4 for a while with the idea of either provoking a2-a3, or exchanging the bishop for White's dark-squared bishop or queenside knight at a suitable moment.

5.♗g2

Because of the flexible nature of the position, Black has a number of sensible moves at this point. He can play **A) 5...d6**, **B) 5...0–0** or **C) 5...d5**.

A) 5...d6

This is quite a popular set-up for Black; next he intends to develop his b8-knight to d7, followed by ...e6-e5.

6.e4

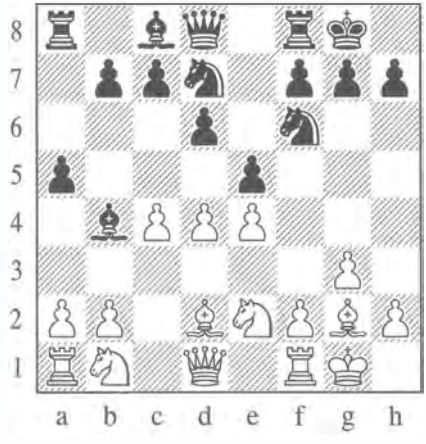
We stick to the idea from the previous line.

6...♘bd7

If 6...0–0 7.♘e2 e5 then we reach a position that will be examined in line B via the 5...0–0 move order.

7.♘e2 0–0 8.0–0 e5

So far we have followed Agovic – Schein, Graz 2001, but now White should vary with:



9.♘bc3!?N

Now the following line is not forced, but it does show typical play:

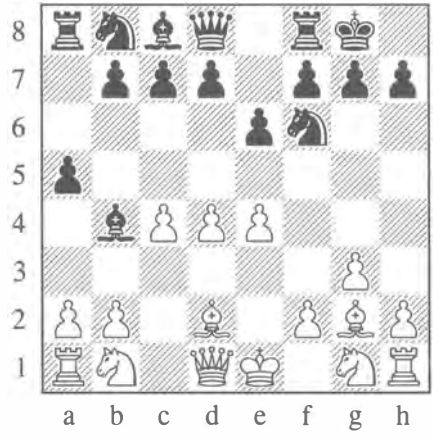
9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘e5 11.b3 ♗c5 12.♘f5

White seems to me to be better after:

12...♗xf5 13.exf5 c6 14.♕c2

White's chances are preferable, as he has a clear plan of improving his position – first ♖ad1 and then h2-h3, ♔h1 (or h2), f2-f4, g3-g4 and so on.

B) 5...0–0 6.e4



This idea should now be very familiar. We benefit from our early fianchetto set-up by developing the g1-knight to e2, while at the same time avoiding a major theoretical tabiya that could arise after 6.♘f3 b6. The text move has only been tried twice in tournament practice, but I believe it is worthy of greater popularity.

6...d5

The other game to reach this position instead continued:

6...d6 7.♘e2 e5

Here I believe White should force Black to trade dark-squared bishops with:

8.a3

The text move is correct because after 8.0–0, as played in Housieaux – Epishin, Bethune 2005, I dislike 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6. In this case White experiences some difficulties in arranging his pieces in an optimal way, taking into account that ♗xb4 is hardly a good idea, while Black's dark-squared bishop might be transferred to c5. 10.♗c3 ♗d7! leads to complicated double-edged play.

8...♗xd2† 9.♘xd2

I prefer recapturing with the knight to the more natural 9.♕xd2 when Black has a nice positional idea in 9...a4 10.♘bc3 ♘c6 and the possibility of ...♘a5 is rather annoying.

9...exd4

Now 9...a4 is not a problem for us after 10.0–0. Black can then provoke us into playing d4-d5 with: 10...♘c6 (if 10...♖e8 we continue 11.♕c2 waiting for Black's set-up, while we can choose between the usual f4-idea and the more positional ♖ac1 and ♖fd1) 11.d5 ♘b8 Black's intention is to transfer his knight to c5 via d7, but we can disrupt his plans with 12.♘c3 ♗d7 and then switch to our main idea of 13.f4, with promising play.

10.♘xd4 ♘c6 11.♘b5 ♘e5 12.0–0 c6 13.♘c3

I prefer White due to his space advantage.



7.e5!N

Certainly this is much more accurate than 7.a3 ♗e7 8.e5 as was played in Cipra – Willim, Bechhofen 1994, because Black could have created excellent play after 8...♘e4!N followed by ...c7-c5.

7...♘fd7 8.cxd5 exd5

Here the play might continue:

9.♘c3 ♘b6

Worse is 9...c5 10.a3 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘c6 12.f4! when White seizes the advantage.

10.♘ge2 c6 11.0–0

With a very complex position, where in my opinion White has every chance of fighting for the advantage.

C) 5...d5 6.♘f3 0–0

The main alternative is 6...dxc4 7.0–0 transposing to a position that was investigated via the Catalan move order on page 44 in *GM Repertoire 1 – 1.d4 Volume One*.

7.0–0



Finally we have arrived at the main crossroads for Black. The main option remains 7...dxc4, but as we know this leads to a Catalan position.

The main independent options are **C1) 7...c6** and **C2) 7...♘c6**.

However, there is a third option that should also be briefly considered:

7...b6

This seems inferior because of the following nice example:

8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e5 ♗b7 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♘c3 ♖d8

Probably the lesser evil would have been 12...♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♕d6, although after 14.c4 White retains a pleasant advantage.

13.♖c1 ♘a6 14.e3 ♕e6 15.♘d3 ♗d6 16.♕b3

White was clearly better in Beliavsky – Kallio, Copenhagen 2002.

C1) 7...c6 8.♕c2 b6

After 8...♘bd7 9.♗f4 White threatens 10.c5 with the idea of trapping Black's dark-squared bishop. After the more or less forced 9...♗e7 10.♖d1 we once again transpose to a Catalan position.

9.♗g5 ♗e7



10.♘bd2

Now Black has a choice between developing his light-squared bishop to b7 or a6.

10...♗b7

Or 10...♗a6 11.♘e5 ♘fd7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♘d3!. As always, it is essential for White to keep both pairs of knights. 13...♘f6 This was Ilincic – Raicevic, Nis 1996, and now White should have continued 14.♖ac1 ♖d8 15.♖fe1 ♘bd7 16.e4 ♖ac8 17.e5 ♘e8 18.♘f4± with slightly better chances.

11.e4!N

This new move is of course the critical one.

11...h6

After 11...dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.♕xe4 White is ready to meet 14...c5 with 15.d5!.

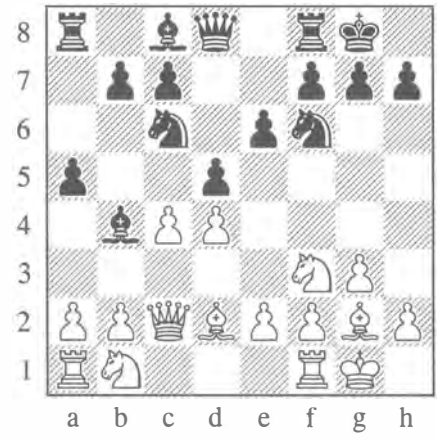
12.♗e3!

Of course White has no intention of giving up his dark-squared bishop.

12...♘a6 13.♖fd1

In my opinion White has a promising version of a Catalan position.

C2) 7...♘c6 8.♕c2



8...dxc4

Black has also tried a couple of other moves:

8...♖a6 can be met with 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♖d1 when the rook is rather misplaced on a6.

8...♗e7 9.♖d1 ♘b4

9...♖a6 has been played by Topalov, but to tell the truth it looks too artificial to me, and after 10.a3 ♗d7 11.♗f4 I do not really understand what Black's rook is doing on a6.

10.♕c1 dxc4

So far this is Avrukh – Ferguson, Internet 2004. In the game I now played the inaccurate 11.♕xc4 and allowed Black to gain reasonable play after 11...b6, while instead I had a simple improvement:



11.a3!N ♘bd5 12.♕xc4

This would secure White a pleasant advantage, with the following point:

12...b6

This is now strongly met by:

13.♕c2!

With the idea of 14.e4.

9.♕xc4 ♕d5

Black can also try 9...♗d6 with the idea of carrying out the ...e6-e5 advance, but after: 10.♘c3 e5 11.d5 (also worth considering is 11.♖fd1 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♕xd4 ♕e7 14.♗g5 ♗e5 15.♕e3!?) 11...♘e7 12.♖ac1 In both cases ...a7-a5 is not exactly a move Black is happy to have played. White was better in Van der Stricht – Sarakauskiene, La Fere 2002.

10.♕xd5

I believe this is the simplest road to an advantage.

10...exd5

Recapturing with the knight would lead to an advantageous position for White, as his Catalan bishop is very strong. For example, 10...♘xd5 11.♘c3 ♗d7 12.♖ac1 ♘xc3 was Tanggaard – O.D. Larsen, Aalborg 1993.



Here I believe White should keep the pressure along the c-file by playing 13.♗xc3N with a pleasant edge after 13...♖fd8 14.a3 ♗d6 15.♘d2.

11.♗f4 ♗g4 12.a3 ♗e7

Black has also experimented with:

12...♗d6 13.♗xd6 cxd6

Now instead of the natural 14.e3 White temporarily sacrificed a central pawn with:

14.♘c3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♘xd4 16.♗g2!

Black did not manage to challenge the validity of White's idea and ended up in a clearly worse position after:

16...♘b3 17.♖ad1 d4 18.♘b5 ♖ac8 19.♘xd4 ♘xd4 20.♖xd4 ♖c2 21.♖b1 ♖xe2 22.♖xd6

And once again the a5-pawn is not really helping Black, Van der Sterren – Garcia Ilundain, Linares 1995.

13.♖d1 ♖fc8 14.♘c3 ♘d8

Obviously Black wants to play ...c7-c6 as soon as possible to remove White's pressure against the d5-pawn.

15.♘e5 ♗e6

This was Vittorino – Morales Rivera, Bogota 2006, and now White could have played more strongly:

16.♗g5!?N c6 17.♘a4 ♖a6



18.♖ac1

White's pieces are much better coordinated.

Conclusion:

It is worth remembering that many transpositions to the Catalan are possible, but in the independent lines White retains an edge and often benefits from the early kingside fianchetto by playing e2-e4 and ♘e2. This chapter also contains some important improvements.





Bogo-Indian

4...♕e7

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♕e7

5.♘f3

A) 5...b6 6.♗g2 ♗b7 7.0–0 37
A1) 7...0–0 37
A2) 7...♗xd2 8.♕xd2 39
A21) 8...d6 39
A22) 8...0–0 41
B) 5...0–0 6.♗g2 ♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 d6 8.♘c3 e5 9.0–0 43
B1) 9...♘c6 43
B2) 9...♗g4 44
B3) 9...♖e8 44
C) 5...♘c6 6.♘c3 45
C1) 6...d5 46
C2) 6...0–0 7.♗g2 48
C21) 7...d6 48
C22) 7...♘a5 49
C3) 6...♗xc3 7.♗xc3 ♘e4 8.♖c1 50
C31) 8...d6 50
C32) 8...0–0 9.♗g2 d6 10.d5 ♘d8 11.0–0 e5 12.♘d2 ♘xc3 13.♖xc3 53
C321) 13...b6 54
C322) 13...♗d7 55
C323) 13...f5 14.c5 ♘f7 15.♕b3 b6 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♕a3! 56
C3231) 17...♗b7 56
C3232) 17...e4 57
C3233) 17...a5 57

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♕e7 5.♘f3

5.♗g2 is quite possible, but after 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♗xd2† it is well known that we have to recapture with 7.♘bxd2, which leads to a different line than planned, because 7.♕xd2 runs into 7...♘e4 followed by 8...♕b4†.

We have reached a standard Bogo-Indian position, which I am always happy to get over the board. The lines to look at here are: **A) 5...b6**, **B) 5...0–0** and **C) 5...♘c6**. The last line is by far Black's most important choice, but there are a few other possibilities for Black, which include different arrangements of his pieces. It is almost impossible to cover all the lines, as the material might be enough to make a whole book, but I will try to offer a good review of the most popular of them.

A) 5...b6

The following set-up is in Queen's Indian style.

6.♗g2 ♗b7 7.0–0



Now Black's best choice is to swap dark-squared bishops. Having said that, there is another line to consider: **A1) 7...0–0** will be covered before we get to the critical **A2) 7...♗xd2**.

A1) 7...0–0

White can underline the drawback of Black's arrangement with:

8.♗g5

White frequently opts for 8.♗f4 with the nice and tricky idea of meeting 8...d5 with the strong 9.c5 when Black would face serious problems. The real problem is that after the correct 8...♗d6 9.♗xd6 cxd6 Black has reasonable play.

8...h6

The most playable alternative to the text is:
8...d5

In this case natural and strong is:
9.♘e5 h6

Otherwise the pin along the h4-d8 diagonal is annoying.
10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.cxd5



Here I want to discuss two options:

a) 11...exd5?! 12.♕b3 ♗d6

If 12...♕d6 then 13.♖c1! and Black's bishop will be really misplaced on a5, as we can see from the following lines: 13...c5 (or 13...♘a6 14.a3 ♗a5 15.♕a4 c5 16.♘c4! ♕f6 17.♘xa5 bxa5 18.♘c3 and White is clearly better) 14.a3 ♗a5 15.♖xc5! The tactics serve our strategy very well. 15...bxc5 16.♕xb7 ♘a6 17.♕xd5 ♕xd5 18.♗xd5± White has a clear advantage.

13.♘c3

Premature would be 13.♗xd5 c6! 14.♗g2 ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♕xe5 and White is only slightly better.

13...c6 14.f4

White's intended advance of e2-e4 will be very powerful; he is clearly better.

b) 11...♗xd5

This seems to be the lesser evil.

We have reached a position from the game Kiselev – Lorenzini, Andorra 1996, and now I would recommend:



12.e4!N ♗b7 13.♘c4

There is no point in entering the complications that arise after 13.♕a4 c5 14.a3 b5!.

13...♕d8 14.a3 ♗e7 15.♖e1

White has the better chances, thanks to his space advantage.

9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.a3 ♗e7 11.♘c3 d6

Black's position would be fine if his queen was on d8, but with his queen misplaced on f6 White has every chance of an advantage.

White is clearly better after 11...d5 12.♘e5 c6 13.e4 ♖d8? (somewhat better was 13...dxc4 although after 14.♘xc4 White's advantage is obvious) 14.♘g4 ♕g6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.exd5 exd5 17.♘e3 and Black lost his central pawn in L. Bronstein – Fuentes, Buenos Aires 1991.

12.♕c2

White creates the tactical threat of 13.♘g5. I would suggest that the natural yet new 12.d5N is also worth serious consideration.

12...c6

Instead 12...♕g6?! is hardly a good idea. After 13.♕xg6 fxg6 14.♗h3 ♔f7 15.d5 White was clearly better in Kulaots – Zavoronkov, Tallinn 2003.

After the text move the following line is a remarkable example of how to handle this position:

13.♖ad1 ♘d7

Black has no time to play 13...d5, as 14.♘e5 ♗d6 does not really help Black, in view of 15.e4! ♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♕xe5 17.exd5 cxd5 18.cxd5 and White is clearly better.



14.d5!

This is the key move in White's concept.

14...exd5 15.♘d4!

The play of my good friend Vladislav Tkachiev in this game made a great impression on me.

15...♖fe8 16.b4

A great positional idea; White is not satisfied with a slight edge after 16.cxd5 c5 17.♘c6, so

instead he intends to undermine Black's pawn structure and especially the d5-pawn by means of b4-b5.

16...a6 17.b5 cxb5 18.cxb5 ♗f8

Unfortunately for Black he cannot play 18...♖ac8 as White has the strong 19.♗h3 and if Black plays 19...♖c7 then 20.bxa6 ♗xa6 21.♗xd7 ♖xd7 22.♘xd5 is horrible for Black.

19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♘xd5

White had a clear positional advantage in Tkachiev – Nikolaidis, Belfort 2004.

A2) 7...♗xd2 8.♕xd2



Black has a choice: **A21) 8...d6** and **A22) 8...0–0**. We have no reason to fear any moves here, and I will mention that it is premature for Black to jump with his knight to e4:

8...♘e4 9.♕f4 d5 10.♘fd2

White has a good version of the Queen's Indian.

10...♘xd2 11.♘xd2 0–0 12.♖ac1 c5?!

Much more sensible was the modest 12...♘a6. Then after 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♘c4! White would be better, with the following point: 14...♕xe2 15.♖fe1 ♕h5 16.♖e5 ♕g6 17.♘e3 White will regain his pawn (on d5) with dividends, as Black cannot play 17...c6, due to 18.♖g5 ♕e6 19.♗h3! ♕xh3 20.♕f6 g6 21.♘f5 winning on the spot.

Returning to the game, which was Poljakov – Subaric, Novi Sad 1945, White now overlooked a strong possibility:



13.cxd5!N exd5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.b4!±

With a clear positional advantage, as White will establish control over the d4-square.

A21) 8...d6

This is a serious alternative to the main line.

9.♘c3 ♘e4

I believe this is Black's best move, as the main alternative runs into trouble:

9...0–0 10.d5!

It is always a good idea to shut down Black's light-squared bishop. Black still has a fairly solid position; nevertheless, White's stable positional advantage is quite obvious to me. Let's see a few possible lines:

10...e5 11.♘h4

White has only an edge after the more positional 11.e4 ♘bd7 12.♘e1 a5 13.♘c2 ♘c5 14.♘e3 g6 15.b3 ♗c8 16.♖ae1 ♗d7 17.f4± Dreev – Kuzubov, Moscow 2006.

11...♗c8 12.e4 ♘g4 13.♖ae1 ♘h6 14.f4 ♘d7

14...exf4 allows 15.e5! with great effect.

15.♘f3 f6 16.♗h3 ♘c5 17.♗xc8 ♖axc8 18.fxe5 fxe5 19.b4 ♘d7 20.♘b5

White gained a clear superiority in Prusikin – Muranyi, Germany 2007.

10.♘xe4 ♗xe4 11.♕e3 ♗b7 12.d5

Otherwise White can hardly fight for an advantage.

12...e5

If 12...♘d7 then White should continue with 13.b4 and after 13...e5 (or if 13...0–0 then 14.♘d4) 14.♘d2 we will reach the same position as after 12...e5.

13.b4

Theory considers 13.♘d2 ♘d7 14.f4 to be quite dangerous for Black, but I am not convinced: 14...exf4 (instead 14...0–0 15.f5 does indeed promise White good chances of developing an initiative on the kingside) 15.♕xe7† ♔xe7 16.gxf4 And now in the game Gagarin – Cherniak, Moscow 1990, Black should have regrouped with 16...♖he8!?N 17.e4 ♔f8 with a pretty sound position.

13...♘d7 14.♘d2 a5 15.a3 0–0

I do not believe Black can allow himself the luxury of 15...a4 (preventing ♘b3) because after 16.♘e4 0–0 17.♘c3 the a4-pawn becomes a serious weakness.

16.♘b3



16...a4

Black has also tried:

16...axb4 17.axb4 ♖fe8

Black's main problem is that exchanging both pairs of rooks is not an ideal solution: 17...♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♖a8 This was recommended by Tisdall in *ChessBase Magazine* 68. White can continue 19.♖xa8† ♗xa8 20.c5! and the positional idea of cutting off Black's bishop from the game by c5-c6 is very unpleasant. Of course the trick is that ...dxc5 (at any point) will be hit by d5-d6. Let's follow this line as far as possible: 20...bxc5 21.bxc5 dxc5 22.d6 ♕e8 23.dxc7 ♗xg2 24.♔xg2 ♕c8 25.♘xc5 ♕xc7 26.♘xd7 ♕xd7 27.♕xe5 We reach a queen ending with 4 pawns versus 3. With perfect play it should be a draw, but in a practical game trying to hold such a position is a difficult and unpleasant task. In general, we should remember that winning a game by force while still in home preparation is impossible against a sound opening. We must be ready to fight over the board.

18.c5

This temporary sacrifice is interesting enough, but a more positional approach would have been 18.♕d3 followed by e2-e4.

18...bxc5 19.bxc5 ♘xc5

19...dxc5? is impossible in view of 20.d6.

20.♘xc5 dxc5 21.♖ab1 ♖ab8

Probably the most critical line would be 21...♗a6 22.d6 cxd6 23.♗xa8 ♖xa8, though here White seems to control the position after 24.♖a1!.

22.♖fc1 ♗a6 23.♖a1 ♖b6 24.♖xc5

Despite massive exchanges White's pressure has only increased, because the c7-pawn is a serious weakness.

24...♗xe2 25.♖ac1 ♗b5 26.♖xc7 ♕d6 27.♖7c6! ♖xc6 28.dxc6

White had a decisive advantage in Neverov – Brodsky, Uzhgorod 1985.

17.♘d4 ♕d8 18.♘b5

A brilliant square for the knight, from where it puts serious pressure on Black's queenside.

18...♗a6 19.♕c3 f5 20.♕c2 ♗xb5



21.cxb5

White had a clear positional advantage in Tukmakov – Onischuk, Donetsk 1998.

A22) 8...0–0 9.♘c3



9...♘e4

Other options to consider include:

9...d6 10.d5 e5 has been examined in line A21 via the 8...d6 move order.

9...d5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 (the more popular 10...exd5 would transpose to Chapter 2, page 23 [4...♗xd2†, 7...♕e7]) 11.♖ac1 White's position is preferable, and now Black's best try is: 11...♘a6 12.♘e5 c5 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 14.♘xd5 exd5 15.♘f3 White had a slight but lasting advantage in Tukmakov – Reshevsky, Vilnius 1978.

10.♘xe4 ♗xe4 11.♕f4

White attacks both Black's light-squared bishop and the c7-pawn, so Black is almost forced to play:

11...d5

11...♗xf3 is plainly a concession, and after 12.♗xf3 c6 13.♖ac1 ♘a6 14.♖c3 ♖fc8 15.a3 White's advantage was obvious in Tatai – Kopec, London 1978.

12.♖ac1 ♘a6

I found the following line quite interesting: 12...c5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♕e3 ♕b7

This is Black's best continuation, and the alternatives are much worse:

15...♕f6 16.♖xc5 ♕xb2 17.♕d2! White is clearly better, and after 17...♕b7 as in Arkell – Dive, Britain (ch) 1994, the natural 18.♖fc1 ♘a6 19.♖c6 ♖ac8 20.♘d4 would have secured White's advantage.

15...♘a6 is also not good: 16.♘d2 ♖fe8 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.♖c4 f5 19.g4! White has a clear edge, Stupica – Lagudin, Slovenia 1996.



16.♕xc5!?N

I believe this new move is White's best option.

To compare with 15...♕f6, now after 16.♖xc5 Black has the intermediate 16...♘d7 at his disposal, which would allow him normal play.

Too soft is 16.b3 ♘a6 which gave Black a normal position in Tal – Cardoso, Las Palmas 1975.

16...♕xb2 17.♕c3!?

With intention to get a favourable endgame, with Black's isolated pawn.

17...♕xa2

Black can also try to capture the other pawn: 17...♕xe2 18.♘d4 ♕h5 (White is clearly better. If 18...♕a6 then 19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.♘f5 ♕f6 21.♕xf6 gxf6 22.♖fe1±.) 19.f3 ♗g6 20.♕c7 ♕g5 21.♖fd1 ♕d8 22.♗f1 White's powerful compensation is undeniable.

18.♘d4 ♕a6

White was threatening 19.♖a1, while 18...♗xg2 would lose to 19.♘f5 f6 20.♕c7.

19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.♘f5 ♕f6 21.♕xf6 gxf6 22.♖c4

The endgame is difficult for Black.

13.cxd5 ♗xd5

Black can recapture with the pawn as well:

13...exd5

This was tested over the board as far back as Budo – Bondarevsky, Tbilisi 1937. Now I believe White should play:



14.♗h3!?N f6

Otherwise 15.♘e5 might cause Black serious problems. For example: 14...c5 15.♘e5 f6 16.♘c6 ♕e8 17.♕d6±

15.a3

Restricting the black knight and practically forcing Black to play ...c7-c5, as White intends to increase his pressure on the queenside by means of 16.b4.

15...c5 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.♘d2 ♗g6 18.♕a4 ♕b7 19.♗g2±

In this complicated position White's chances are better.

14.♘e5

A strong and concrete plan that proves sufficient for an advantage.

14...c5

If 14...♗xg2 15.♔xg2 c5 16.dxc5 bxc5 (unfortunately for Black the desirable recapture with the knight does not work: 16...♘xc5 17.b4 ♕b7† 18.♕f3 ♕xf3† 19.♔xf3 ♘a6 20.♘c6±) 17.♕a4 would transpose to 14...c5.

15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♕a4 ♗xg2 17.♔xg2 ♕b7† 18.♔g1 ♖fd8

The b2-pawn is untouchable: 18...♕xb2 19.♘c4 ♕b7 20.♖b1 and Black loses his knight.



19.♘d3 ♖d4 20.♖c4 ♖xc4 21.♕xc4

White had a stable advantage in Huebner – Larsen, Las Palmas 1976.

B) 5...0–0

This natural move is the start of an important line, although, as previously mentioned, line C is the real main line.

6.♗g2 ♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 d6

This is quite thematic for the 4...♕e7 line, whereas 7...d5 would transpose to the 4...♗xd2† line.

8.♘c3 e5 9.0–0



The main branching point in this line; the three big moves are: **B1) 9...♘c6**, **B2) 9...♗g4** and **B3) 9...♖e8**. Besides these, it also makes sense to have a brief look at 9...c6, although this seems to be somewhat passive; White obviously sets the tone. Here is one recent example: 10.e4 ♗g4 11.♘h4 ♘a6 12.♖ae1 ♖fe8 13.f4 exf4 14.♕xf4 with a promising position for White in Radjabov – Sadiku, Kemer 2007.

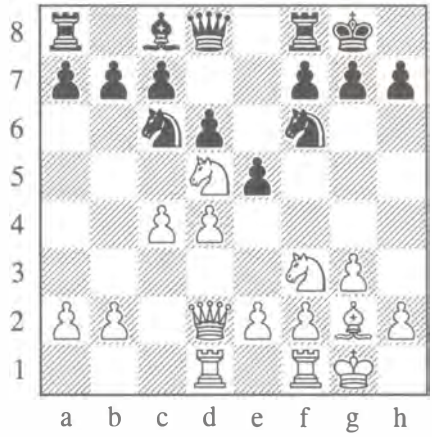
B1) 9...♘c6

This seems to be inferior, due to:

10.♘d5! ♕d8

After 10...♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.♖ac1 White gains a serious strategic advantage, due to the permanent weakness of the c7-pawn. The game H. Olafsson – Bonin, New York 1986, continued: 13...♖e8 14.♖fe1 ♕f6 (this attempt to create some counterplay falls short) 15.♖xc7 b6 16.♖c4 d3 17.♖f4 ♕g6 18.e4 Black's d3-pawn is falling.

11.♖ad1



11...♖e8

After the natural:

11...♗g4

White favourably releases the tension in the centre with:

12.dxe5 ♘xd5

Also 12...dxe5 does not solve Black's problems. White has the strong 13.♕e3! and he was clearly better after 13...♘d7 14.♖d2 ♗xf3 15.exf3! in Euwe – Henneberger, Bern 1932, as Black fails to maintain a strong outpost on d4: 15...♘d4 16.f4 f6 17.fxe5 fxe5 18.f4!±

13.cxd5 ♘xe5 14.♘d4

Again White has a desirable type of position with Black's c7-pawn being a permanent target, Zirngibl – Handel, Leipzig 1959.

12.dxe5 ♘xe5

12...dxe5 is met strongly by 13.♕e3 followed by doubling the rooks along the d-file.

13.♘xe5 dxe5

13...♖xe5 14.♘c3 leaves White with a pleasant edge.

14.♕a5 ♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♕d6 16.♖c1 ♖e7 17.♖c3

White was better in J. Pinter – De Guzman, Manila (ol) 1992.

B2) 9...♗g4 10.♘e1 ♘c6

Again I do not see how Black can solve his problems in this line.

The key game Huzman – Azarov, Izmir 2004, continued: 10...exd4 11.♕xd4 ♘c6 12.♕d2 ♕d7 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.cxd5 ♘e5 White has achieved a desirable pawn structure, but Black has some activity. I found the following improvement: 15.♖c1!?N Now if 15...♕b5 then 16.♘f3! is very strong: 16...♗xf3 17.exf3 ♖ac8 18.♖c3 Followed by ♖fc1 and f3-f4. White has serious pressure.

After the text move I found an unexpected resource.



11.♘d5!?N

The natural 11.d5 should also favour White, but Black is very much in the game after 11...♘b8 12.e4 c6 13.♘d3 cxd5 14.cxd5 ♘a6, as in Malaniuk – Moiseenko, Krasnodar 1999.

11...♕d8

A vital point is that Black cannot play 11...♘xd5 12.cxd5 ♘xd4? as he loses material after 13.e3 ♘f5 14.h3, followed by 15.g4.

12.dxe5 dxe5

After the other recapture 12...♘xe5, White replies 13.♘e3 attacking both the b7-pawn and Black's light-squared bishop. 13...♗c8 14.♖d1 ♕e7 15.♘d3 White definitely has pressure.

13.h3 ♗e6 14.♖d1 ♖e8 15.♘c2±

White has the better chances; his centralized knight is very annoying for Black.

B3) 9...♖e8



10.e4 ♗g4 11.♘e1

Despite being only White's second most popular choice, I prefer this move, as I believe the right concept is not to make it easy for Black to trade his poor light-squared bishop.

More often White chooses 11.d5, but after 11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 a5, followed by ...♘a6, we

reach a double-edged position that is thematic for this line.

11...♘c6

Also possible is 11...exd4 and here I like the following example: 12.♕xd4 ♘c6 13.♕d2 a5 14.f3 (14.♖c1 ♕d8 15.b3 is also an option) 14...♗e6 15.♘d5 ♕d8 16.♘c2 ♘e5 17.♘ce3 White retained the better chances in Tukmakov – Kurajica, Solin 1999.



12.♘c2!

The point of White's idea; he has no intention of playing d4-d5 unless it is the ideal moment.

12...♘xd4 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♕xd4

I believe this is a favourable type of position for White that he should aim for in this line. The main line runs as follows:

14...♕e5 15.♕d2 ♕h5

It is no wonder Black wants to solve the problem of his badly placed bishop.

16.f3 ♗h3

Black manages to swap his bishop, but White still retains the better chances.

17.♖ac1

The idea is ♘d5 at a suitable moment.

17...♖e7

Or 17...♗xg2 18.♔xg2 ♕e5 19.♖fd1 ♖ad8 20.♕f2 and Black fails to create any play, while White naturally improves his position: 20...a6 21.♖d2 b6 22.b4 ♘d7 23.♘d5± Vyzmanavin – Landenbergue, Manila (ol) 1992.



18.g4!

White takes the opportunity to transfer to a favourable endgame.

18...♕c5† 19.♕f2 ♕xf2† 20.♖xf2 ♗xg2 21.♔xg2 c6

Naturally Black wants to cover the d5-square, but now the d6-pawn becomes a permanent weakness.

22.♖d2 ♘e8 23.h4 h5 24.g5 a5 25.♘a4 ♖a6 26.♖cd1 ♔h7 27.♔g3 ♔g6 28.c5

White had clearly gained the upper hand in Cvitan – V. Kovacevic, Pula 1996.

C) 5...♘c6

Finally we have reached Black's most important option.

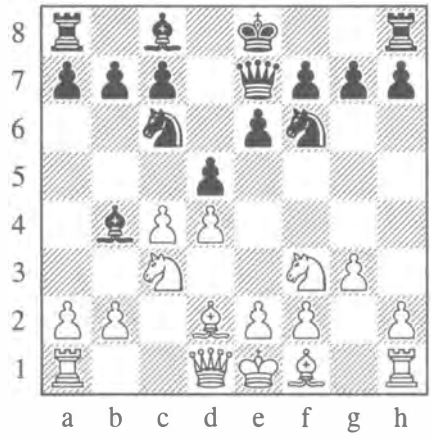
6.♘c3

In my opinion this is the most principled line and it gives White good chances of seizing an edge. As was already mentioned, after the

natural 6.♗g2 Black captures on d2, 6...♗xd2†, forcing the knight recapture, as 7.♕xd2 runs into 7...♘e4 followed by ...♕b4†.

After the text move Black has three main choices: **C1) 6...d5**, **C2) 6...0–0** and **C3) 6...♗xc3**.

C1) 6...d5



I am always somewhat sceptical about this pawn structure once Black's knight is on c6, and in this case I do believe White has a very comfortable game.

7.a3

White not only forces Black to give up his dark-squared bishop, but also defends the c4-pawn indirectly.

7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 a5

Sooner or later Black should opt for this move. It would make no sense for Black to play 8...dxc4, as after 9.♕a4 White regains the pawn with dividends, as his Catalan bishop becomes very strong along the h1-a8 diagonal.

But of course Black has other options:

8...0–0 9.♗g2 ♖d8

9...♘e4 10.♕c2 would lead to the same position after 10...a5, or 10...♖d8.

10.0–0 ♘e4

In a recent game Black tried a queenside fianchetto but without much success: 10...b6 11.♕c2 ♗b7 12.b3 a5 13.♗b2 The bishop pair gives White a pleasant game. 13...a4 14.b4 dxc4 15.♕xc4 ♘a7 16.♖fc1 ♖dc8 17.♘e5 White trades light-squared bishops, but this allows him to establish control over the centre. 17...♗xg2 18.♔xg2 c6 19.♕d3 ♘d7 20.♘c4 ♖c7 21.♖c2 ♖ac8 22.♖ac1 ♘b5 23.e4 White was clearly better due to his extra space in Ivanchuk – Bezgodov, Khanty-Mansiysk (2) 2009.

11.♕c2

Now Black really should play 11...a5, transposing to the 8...a5-variation, as after:

11...♗d7

This was C. Mueller – Heumann, Bavaria 2005, and now White should of course take the opportunity to play:



12.b4!N ♘xc3

Otherwise White can keep his bishop with ♗b2.

13.♕xc3

White's stable advantage is obvious.

9.♗g2 0–0 10.0–0 ♖d8

I also checked:

10...♘e4 11.♕c2 a4

This may look quite promising, but in fact it is nothing special, as Black can hardly carry out his idea of ...♘a5-b3.

12.♖ac1 ♗d7 13.♖fd1 ♖fd8 14.♗e1

Also worthy of consideration is 14.♘e5!?.

14...♗e8 15.♘h4 ♘f6

So far this is Babula – Vehi Bach, Dresden 2007, and here I worked out the following line for White:

16.cxd5 exd5 17.♘f5 ♕e6 18.f3

In such situations it is essential for White to activate his dark-squared bishop.

18...g6 19.♘h6† ♔g7 20.♕d2 ♘g8 21.♘xg8 ♔xg8 22.g4

White's dark-squared bishop comes to g3. White's chances are better, due to his pair of bishops and of course he should aim to open up the position in the centre with e2-e4.

11.♕c2 ♘e4

This is the main arrangement of pieces for Black. As was proven in the following encounter, this is not a good moment for Black to play 11...a4 12.♘e5! ♗d7 13.♖fd1 ♗e8 14.♖ac1 and Black could hardly generate any activity in Razuvaev – Rashkovsky, Moscow 1989.

12.b3



12...♗d7

Another idea is to exchange the knight for the bishop:

12...♘xc3 13.♕xc3

Black can of course play 13...♗d7 here.

The attempt to create immediate counterplay in the centre with:

13...e5?!

Falls short to:

14.dxe5

Also quite promising looks 14.♘xe5!?N ♘xe5 15.dxe5 d4 16.♕b2 ♕xe5 17.e3 c5 18.♖ad1.

14...d4 15.♕b2 ♗g4 16.♖fd1 ♕c5

Of course Black can regain the pawn with 16...♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♕xe5, but after 18.♖d3 his position is very unpleasant, as the d4-pawn appears to be a serious target.

17.♖d2 a4 18.b4 ♕xc4 19.♖c1 ♕b3 20.♕a1! ♗f5

This was P. Nikolic – Adams, Hastings 1989, and now White has an improvement.



21.♘e1!N

This move would have been extremely strong.

The idea is to play ♘d3-c5, while after:

21...♕e6 22.♗xc6 bxc6 23.♖xd4

White is simply a pawn up.

13.♗b2

It is always nice to keep the bishop pair.

13...♗e8 14.♖ac1 f6

Black intends to activate his bishop along the e8-h5 diagonal, but his position in the centre appears to be vulnerable, as was shown in the following encounter:



15.♘h4! g5 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♘f5 ♕e6 18.♗h3 ♔h8 19.f3 ♘d6 20.e4! ♗g6 21.exd5

Here the computer recommends a tactical solution with 21.♘xd6 ♕xd6 22.e5!, but my move is good enough.

21...♕xd5 22.♘e3 ♕f7 23.♕f2

The position opens up in White's favour, Avrukh – Rashkovsky, Biel 2002.

C2) 6...0–0 7.♗g2



Here it is possible to play **C21) 7...d6** or **C22) 7...♘a5**, which is probably the most interesting side line. In general 7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 ♘e4 9.♖c1 would transpose to the main line, but we have to eliminate Black's other ideas:

C21) 7...d6

Quite a tricky move order. In my opinion White should play:

8.d5!

I originally thought White should simply castle, but then I noticed an improvement for Black on move 11. The main point shows up in the following line:

8.0–0 ♗xc3 9.♗xc3 ♘e4 10.♖c1

White could keep his dark-squared bishop with10.♗e1, but after 10...f5 11.d5 ♘d8 12.dxe6 ♘xe6 Black is very much in the game, thanks to his active pieces. This gives him good compensation for White's bishop pair, Gleizerov – Bocharov, Abu Dhabi 2004.

10...e5 11.d5

And now instead of transposing to the main line with 11...♘d8 12.♘d2 ♘xc3 13.♖xc3 f5, Black can choose:

11...♘b8!

This seems very reasonable for Black after either 12.♗e1 f5 or 12.♘d2 ♘xc3 13.♖xc3 a5.

8...♘b8

Black has three other possibilities to consider:

8...♘e5 9.♘xe5 dxe5 This position has occurred in two games, but nobody has opted for 10.a3!N with the simple idea of taking the dark-squared bishop. 10...♗c5 (certainly White is comfortably better after 10...♗xc3 11.♗xc3 exd5 12.cxd5 ♖d8 13.♕b3) 11.♘a4! ♖d8 12.♘xc5 ♕xc5 13.♖c1! White is better with his bishop pair.

8...♘d8 This does not make much sense here and after 9.♘d4 exd5 10.♘xd5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♗c5 12.♗c3 White had a very pleasant advantage in Yrjola – Jouhki, Helsinki 1998.

8...♗xc3 This is unquestionably a concession. 9.♗xc3 ♘b8 10.dxe6 (also good enough is 10.♘d4 e5 11.♘c2) 10...fxe6 11.0–0 a5 12.♘d4 ♘bd7 13.♕d2 a4 This is the game Franic – P. Horvath, Croatia 2004, and now White could have secured his advantage with 14.♘b5N ♘c5 15.♗xf6! ♖xf6 16.f4.

9.dxe6 fxe6 10.0–0 ♘c6 11.♘e1!

A very strong idea; the knight is heading for c2, forcing Black to give up his dark-squared bishop and increasing the influence of White's light-squared bishop.

11...♔h8

Another game continued: 11...♗xc3 12.♗xc3 e5 13.♘c2 Now White's knight transfers to a powerful square on d5. 13...♕f7 14.♘e3 ♗e6 15.♘d5 ♖ac8 In Berebora – Pacal, Hungary 1995, White could have seized the initiative with 16.f4!±.

12.♘c2 ♗xc3 13.♗xc3 ♗d7 14.b4

White has a promising initiative.

14...♖ae8 15.b5 ♘d8

This position was reached in Sosonko – Langeweg, Leeuwarden 1978, and now White could have gained an edge with:

16.f4N ♕f7 17.♕d3

Followed by 18.♖ad1.

C22) 7...♘a5 8.b3 b6 9.0–0 ♗b7 10.♕c2



10...♖ac8

This was played in almost every game where the diagram position was reached.

Probably Black is not entirely satisfied with the position that might arise after 10...c5, as in Saatdjian – Milliet, Cap d'Agde 2008. In this case I would also recommend taking the bishop with: 11.a3!?N ♗xc3 12.♗xc3 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♘c6 15.♖fd1±

After the text move I offer a new idea:

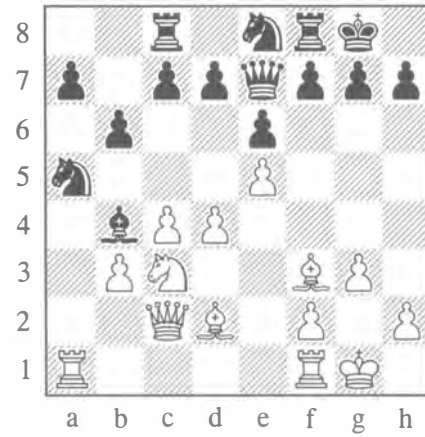
11.a3!?N ♗xa3

The most principled reply, as if 11...♗xc3 12.♗xc3 ♗e4 13.♕b2 d6 we get a typical Queen's Indian position, but I believe White should be better after 14.♗h3 (with the idea of playing ♘d2) as Black's knight is slightly misplaced on a5.

12.e4 ♗b4 13.e5 ♗xf3

It appears that Black has to give up his light-squared bishop, as 13...♘e8 runs into the strong 14.♘g5 f5 15.♗xb7 ♘xb7 16.♖xa7 regaining the pawn and keeping clearly better chances.

14.♗xf3 ♘e8



15.♗g2!?⩲

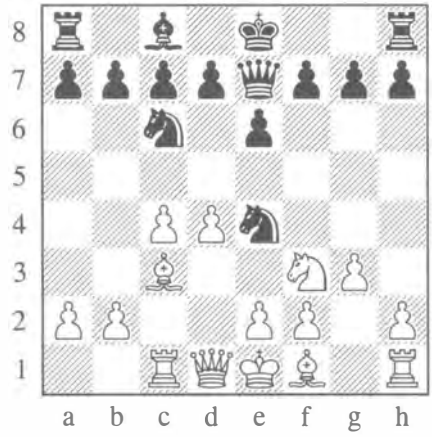
White could have won the pawn back with 15.♖a4 c5 16.dxc5 ♗xc5 17.♘b5 ♘c6 18.♘xa7 ♘xa7 19.♖xa7, but after 19...f6 Black should be alright.

The main point of 15.♗g2 is to remove the bishop from the f-file, and thus be ready to meet ...f7-f6 with f2-f4. There are no concrete lines, but I believe White has wonderful positional compensation for the pawn, due to Black's poorly placed minor pieces.

C3) 6...♗xc3

Black's most common choice.

7.♗xc3 ♘e4 8.♖c1



At this point Black is all about development. There is no need to take on c3 as of yet, so the two main moves are **C31) 8...d6** and **C32) 8...0–0**. I should mention one funny move:

8...♘b4

This is hardly a serious option; the following example seems quite convincing:

9.♕a4 a5 10.♗g2 0–0 11.♘d2 ♘xc3 12.bxc3!

With Black's pawn on a5, recapturing with the b-pawn looks very logical and strong.

12...♘c6 13.c5 d5 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.♖b1 ♕c7 16.♕b3

White had much better chances in Tukmakov – Rashkovsky, Minsk 1987.

C31) 8...d6 9.d5 ♘xc3 10.♖xc3



This is a big theoretical tabiya.

Obviously Black has two knight moves – b8 or d8. Putting the knight on e5 would quickly lead to a cramped position. White just takes it and is better; there is no need for further details. Amazingly one game was played between GMs with 10...♘e5 (though admittedly just a rapid game). Benjamin was Black and eventually drew an inferior position after Sosonko played his knight to d4. Had Sosonko taken on e5 Benjamin might not have been so lucky...

10...♘b8

The alternative is:

10...♘d8 11.♗g2

This should transpose to our main line after 11...0–0 12.0–0 (12.dxe6 ♘xe6 is quite playable for Black), but it is important to have a short look at:

11...e5

Playing this before castling is dubious in view of the following impressive game.

12.c5 0–0 13.cxd6 cxd6 14.♕c1 ♗d7 15.0–0 f5 16.♖c7 ♕e8 17.♕e3

This is the point behind 14.♕c1.

17...♗b5 18.♖fc1 ♗a6 19.♘h4!

Black's bishop is missing from the defence, so White immediately starts playing on the kingside.

19...h6 20.♗h3 ♕h5 21.♕f3!

White had a decisive advantage in Yevseev – I. Smirnov, Alushta 2002.

11.dxe6 fxe6

11...♗xe6 leads to a stable advantage for White after 12.♘d4 0–0 13.♗g2 c6 14.0–0 as in Bischoff – Spiegel, St Ingbert 1993.

12.♘d4

The most accurate move order.

12...0–0 13.♗g2



13...e5

This is Black's most popular choice.

It is important to note that 13...♘d7? would just be a blunder, as 14.♘xe6!+– makes very clear. This shows that one of the ideas behind 12.♘d4 is to prevent Black comfortably redeveloping his knight.

A more respectable alternative is:

13...c6 14.0–0

Black's best option is 14...e5, which transposes to 14...c6 at the top of the next page.

14...a5

This seems a risky concept to me, as was shown convincingly in the following encounter:

15.♕d2 ♘d7 16.♖d1 ♘e5 17.♘f3!

Black's d-pawn is a serious target.

17...♘f7 18.♖a3 ♕c7



19.♘g5!

White immediately takes the opportunity to exchange Black's knight, which will make the d6-pawn more vulnerable.

19...d5

This is certainly not a move Black wants to play, as now his bishop remains very passive, while the weakness of the dark squares in the centre is a significant detail.

20.♖f3 ♘xg5 21.♖xf8† ♔xf8 22.♕xg5 ♕e7 23.♕d2

In Davies – Arkell, London 1989, White gained a clear advantage, as it is very difficult for Black to develop his bishop. For instance, 23...♗d7 just loses a pawn to 24.e4!.

14.♘c2 ♘d7

This is Black's most popular move, but let's have a look at the others just in case:

14...♘c6 15.0–0 ♗e6 16.b4

This leads to a pleasant edge for White, as was proved in the following game:

16...a6

Black cannot play 16...a5 17.b5 ♘b4, as after 18.♗xb7 ♖ab8 19.♗g2 ♘xa2 20.♖a3 ♘b4 (or 20...♗xc4 21.♘e3 ♗e6 22.♘d5±) 21.♖xa5 he remains a pawn down.

17.b5 ♘d8 18.♘b4 axb5 19.cxb5 ♔h8 20.a4

♕d7 21.♕c2

White had a clear advantage in Malaniuk – Fedorchuk, Ordzhonikidze 2001.

14...c6 15.0–0 ♗e6 16.b4

White has easy play on the queenside.

16...a6

16...a5 makes no sense, as after 17.b5! cxb5 18.cxb5 ♗xa2 19.♘e3 White has powerful compensation, with the following nice point: 19...a4 20.♗d5† ♗xd5 21.♘xd5 ♕f7 22.♖f3! is winning.

17.♘e3 ♘d7 18.♕c2 ♘f6 19.♖d3

White doubles his rooks on the d-file, putting pressure on Black's d-pawn.

19...♖fd8 20.♖fd1 ♖d7 21.♕b2 ♖ad8 22.a4

Black is pretty solid, but White obviously had some pressure in Zakharevich – Kulikov, Tula 2002.

14...♘a6 15.0–0 c6 16.♕d2 ♗e6

I also examined 16...♘c5 17.♖d1 ♖f6, when White has the neat resource 18.♖a3!. Black cannot prevent the b2-b4 advance, for example: 18...♕f7 19.b4 ♘d7 20.♘e3 and White is clearly better, as Black does not have a proper defence against the impending 21.♖d3.

17.♘e3 ♖ad8 18.♖a3!

White not only prepares b2-b4, but also creates some tactical ideas such as ♗xc6, or ♖xa6 ...bxa6 ♗xc6.

18...♕f7?!

I tried to improve on Black's play with 18...♕c7 which would indeed be the best continuation, but White still retains a pleasant edge after 19.b4 ♕b6 20.♖b3 ♖f7 21.a3.

This position occurred in Polugaevsky – Gipslis, Moscow 1979. Now I see nothing wrong with:

19.♗xc6!N bxc6 20.♖xa6

White just wins a pawn. For instance:

20...♗h3 21.♘g2 d5 22.cxd5 cxd5 23.♖a5 ♕b7 24.f3 ♕b6† 25.♔h1

Black does not have enough compensation.

15.0–0 ♘f6

If 15...a5 White has the unpleasant 16.♖a3! and he was clearly better after 16...♘c5 17.b4 ♘e6 18.♖xa5 ♖xa5 19.bxa5 ♘c5 20.♘b4 in Shneider – Naiditsch, Istanbul 2003.

16.♘e3 c6

Good or bad, Black has to take control over the d5-square. However, in two games Black mistakenly opted for 16...♖b8.



In both encounters White missed the simple 17.♘d5!N ♕f7 18.♘xf6† ♕xf6 19.c5! with a clear edge.

17.♖d3 ♖d8 18.♕d2 ♗e6 19.♖d1 ♘e8

White has mobilized his pieces optimally, so now is the right moment to push the b-pawn.

20.b4 ♖d7

A couple of other moves are worth mentioning in passing:

20...♖ac8 21.b5 (I prefer the modest 21.a4!? but the game move is good enough) 21...cxb5 22.cxb5 ♖c5 23.♕b4 White was obviously better in C. Horvath – Sulc, Pula 1998.

20...a6 21.a4 ♖d7 was played in Killer – Wehbrink, e-mail 2002. Now I did not manage to find the reason White refrained from the

natural 22.b5 axb5 23.axb5 cxb5 24.cxb5 with unpleasant pressure.

21.b5

White combines pressure along the d-file with activity on the white squares.

21...cxb5 22.cxb5 ♖c8

This is Tkachiev – Adams, Cannes 2001. Now, as correctly pointed out by Ftacnik, who annotated this game in *ChessBase Magazine 82*, White could have increased his pressure as follows:

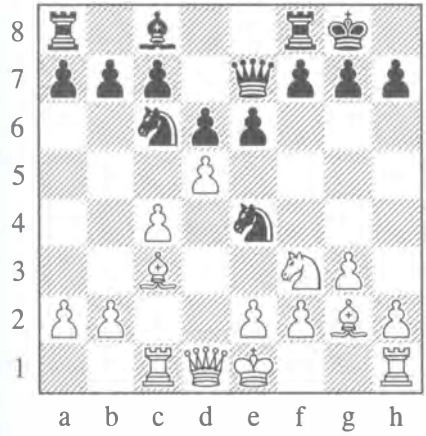
23.♘d5!N ♕d8

23...♗xd5 24.♗xd5† ♔h8 25.♖a3±

24.♖a3 ♖c5 25.♖xa7 ♖xb5 26.♘c3

White has a clear edge.

C32) 8...0–0 9.♗g2 d6 10.d5



10...♘d8

This is Black's most popular move order in this line, but he has a couple of other options as well:

10...♘xc3 11.♖xc3 ♘d8

After 11...♘b8 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.♘d4! we transpose to a position that was covered via the 8...d6 move order.

12.0–0 e5

The waiting move 12...a5 appears to be inferior: 13.♘d2 e5 14.c5 dxc5 15.♘b3 (15.♕c2 also looks pretty strong) 15...a4 16.♘xc5 ♖a5 This is Tkachiev – Chabanon, Cannes 1999, and now the natural 17.♕c2 would pose Black serious problems.

13.♘d2

The play would transpose to our main line. It is very important to note that 13.c5 would allow Black reasonable play after 13...dxc5! 14.♕c2 e4 15.♘d2 f5 16.♖xc5 c6!.

In my initial analysis I did not pay attention to Black's other knight retreat:

10...♘b8

But then I remembered the game Laznicka – Bologan, which was played in the last World Cup, so I decided to make a small review.

11.dxe6

It is also worth considering 11.♕c2!?.

11...fxe6

After 11...♗xe6 White should play: 12.♘d4 ♗d7 (obviously the c4-pawn is untouchable: 12...♗xc4? 13.♘f5 is simply bad for Black) 13.0–0 ♘c6 This is Adorjan – Beliavsky, Hungary 2000, and now I like the following new idea: 14.♘b5!N ♖ac8 15.♗d4 a6 The a7-pawn was not really hanging, but it would be annoying for Black to have to think about this every move. (For example, note that the natural 15...♖fe8 fails to 16.♗xa7! b6 17.♗xb6 cxb6 18.♗xe4 ♕xe4 19.♘xd6. Then Black cannot play 19...♕xe2 in view of 20.♕xe2 ♖xe2 21.♘xc8 ♗xc8 22.♖fe1! and, after exchanging rooks, White's queenside pawn majority should easily decide the game.) 16.♘c3 White retains a small but lasting edge, thanks to his favourable pawn structure after either 16...♘xc3 17.♗xc3± or 16...♘xd4 17.♘xe4 ♘e6 (17...♘c6 allows White to strike with 18.c5!) 18.♘c3±.

12.0–0 ♘d7 13.♗e1 a5 14.♘d2 ♘ef6 15.♘b3 a4

This is the game I mentioned above, Laznicka – Bologan, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, and now I found a nice improvement:

16.♘a5!N ♘c5 17.b4 axb3 18.axb3 ♖a7 19.b4 ♘a6 20.♕b3

White has a very pleasant game, thanks to his pressure on the queenside.

11.0–0 e5 12.♘d2



12...♘xc3

Black should take the bishop, but the alternative has also been tested:

12...♘xd2

This is not such a good idea, as White's dark-squared bishop will eventually become very powerful. For example:

13.♕xd2 b6 14.b4 f5 15.f4!

An important move in White's strategy, as he has no intention of allowing Black to play ...f4 himself.

15...♘f7 16.♖ce1

With the intention of opening up the position with the advance e2-e4.

16...e4 17.♕d4 ♘h6 18.h3±

Black had a strategically very difficult position in Cvitan – Matijevic, Zadar 1995. Black is tied to the defence of the g7-pawn, while White controls the long diagonal and slowly prepares c4-c5.

13.♖xc3



At this point it probably makes most sense to get on with it on the kingside with 13...f5, but Black also has two other reasonable options: **C321) 13...b6**, **C322) 13...♗d7** and **C323) 13...f5**.

C321) 13...b6 14.f4

After 14.b4 a5! 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 f5 Black gets an improved version of our main line with a couple of pawns exchanged on the queenside and an active rook. 17.c5 bxc5 18.bxc5 ♘f7 19.♕c2 f4 20.cxd6 cxd6 21.♖c7 ♕f6 22.♕c3 ♗g4 led to balanced play in Tkachiev – Benjamin, Cap d'Agde 2000.

14...exf4

I believe this is critical, as after 14...a5 15.f5! f6 16.g4 ♘f7 17.♘e4 White has easy play on the kingside, while Black lacks any counterplay. In Zakharevich – Ulibin, Azov 1996, it is not surprising that Black tried to change the course of the game with the risky 17...h5 18.gxh5 ♘h6, but this only helped White to build his kingside offensive by 19.♗h3 ♗d7 20.♖g3 ♗e8 21.♕d2 ♔h8 22.♔h1 ♗xh5 23.♖fg1 with a dangerous attack.

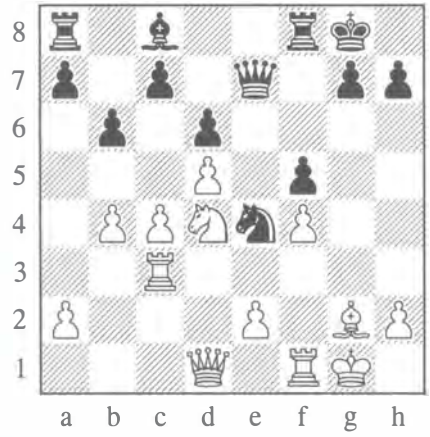
15.gxf4

After 15.♖xf4 Black can set up a solid position with 15...f6 followed by ...♘f7-e5.

15...f5 16.♘b3

White can stop Black's idea of transferring his knight to c5 with 16.♘f3 ♘b7 17.b4, but this would allow Black to create counterplay after 17...a5 18.a3 axb4 19.axb4 ♖a2 20.♘d4 ♕f6! with a double-edged position.

16...♘b7 17.♘d4 ♘c5 18.b4 ♘e4



19.♗xe4

I would also consider 19.♖e3!? with the idea of forcing Black to recapture on e4 with the pawn, reaching the same type of position that arose in the game.

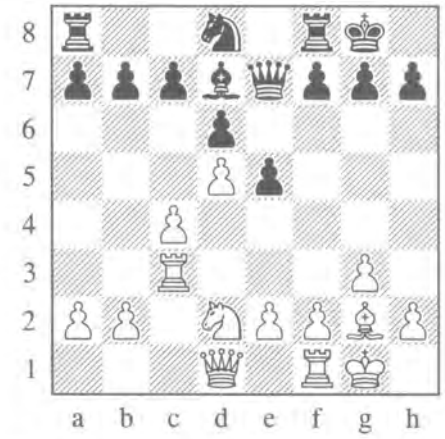
19...fxe4

I believe Black should have opted for 19...♕xe4 20.♖ff3 ♕e7. Although White is better after 21.♖g3, Black may be able to hold his position together.

20.♕d2 ♗f5 21.♖g3

White had a slight but lasting advantage, without any risk, in Jepson – Holst, Hallsberg 1991.

C322) 13...♗d7



This does not help Black, as White can play his planned advance anyway:

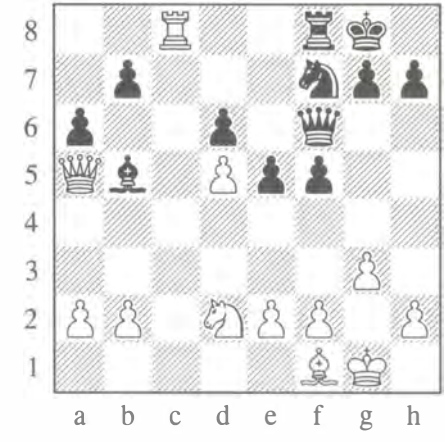
14.c5 f5

If 14...dxc5 then White has the e4-square for his knight: 15.♘e4 (this is more precise than 15.♘b3 ♗a4) 15...b6 16.b4 f5 17.♘xc5! bxc5 18.d6 cxd6 19.♗xa8 ♘e6 20.♗d5± Black has no compensation.

15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♖c7

Since the d7-bishop blocks Black's queen, the c7-square is available for White's rook; he has seized the initiative.

16...♖c8 17.♖xc8 ♗xc8 18.♕a4 a6 19.♖c1 ♗d7 20.♕a5 ♗b5 21.♗f1 ♕f6 22.♖c8 ♘f7



23.♕c7!

White had a clear advantage in Gyimesi – Ikonnikov, Vlissingen 2002.

C323) 13...f5

The right way to activate Black's knight.

14.c5



14...♘f7

Instead of the text move Black sometimes tries:

14...dxc5 15.♘b3

Black's idea was to try to transpose to the variation 15.♕c2 e4, which was mentioned in the 10...♘xc3-line on page 53.

15...e4 16.♘xc5

I believe White's chances are better, for instance:

16...♘f7

Or 16...b6 17.♘b3 ♗b7 18.f3!.

17.♕c2 ♕d6 18.♖d1

In both cases White's position is preferable.

15.♕b3

There is no great difference between the text and 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♕b3.

15...b6

Black has no time for the thematic attack on the kingside: 15...f4 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♖fc1 White is clearly better, as we can see from the following example: 17...fxg3 18.hxg3 ♕g5 19.♘e4 ♕h6 20.♖c7 ♗f5 21.♕xb7 ♖ab8 22.♕xa7 ♖xb2 23.♕a3! White won a pawn and kept everything under control in Dautov – Reeh, Baden-Baden 2008.

16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♕a3!

I believe this is more accurate than 17.♖fc1, as it does not allow Black the extra option of 17...♗a6.



Finally we have arrived at the main branching point of this chapter. The three moves I have decided to look at here are: **C3231) 17...♗b7**, **C3232) 17...e4** and **C3232) 17...a5**.

C3231) 17...♗b7

This is Black's most popular choice.

18.♖fc1 ♖fc8

In his comments in *ChessBase Magazine* 106 Dautov gave the following illustrative lines:

18...e4 19.♖c7 ♕g5 20.f4! exf3 21.♘xf3 ♕h6 22.♘d4 ♖ac8 23.e3± with a big advantage.

18...♕g5 19.e3 e4 20.f4! ♕h5 (it seems more natural to me to try 20...♕f6, but White carries

out the same idea, 21.♘b3 ♗xd5 22.♘d4, with excellent compensation) 21.♘b3 ♗xd5 22.♘d4 a6 23.♖c7 Despite being a pawn up, Black is almost paralysed.

19.e4

Now the key game in this line continued:

19...♖xc3

Black's position is very passive after 19...g6 20.h4 ♔g7 21.♘c4, and it is no wonder he now committed a serious mistake: 21...b5? 22.♘a5 a6 23.♘c6 ♗xc6 24.dxc6 In Bocharov – J. Grant, Istanbul 2003, Black was strategically lost.

20.♖xc3 fxe4 21.♘xe4

A serious alternative is 21.♗xe4!?.

21...♕d8

It is easy to understand why Black was scared of grabbing the pawn with 21...♗xd5, as after 22.♘f6† gxf6 23.♗xd5≅ it is very difficult to defend such a position.



22.h4 a6

22...♗c8 was suggested by Dautov as an improvement over the game. I believe after 23.♖c6 ♗d7 24.♘xd6! ♗xc6 25.♘xf7 ♔xf7 26.dxc6 White's position is almost winning.

23.♕b3!

This is Dautov – Wahls, Germany 2005. White's positional advantage is obvious. He is threatening the positional idea of ♗h3-e6, while after 23...♗c8 he penetrates along the c-file by means of 24.♕c4 followed by ♕c7.

C3232) 17...e4



18.♖fc1

It is also worth considering 18.f3!?N with the idea that 18...exf3 19.♘xf3 ♘e5 20.♘d4 is clearly better for White, and 18...♕e5 19.♖d1 exf3 20.♘xf3 ♕xe2 21.♖e1 ♕a6 22.♖e7 gives White strong compensation.

18...♗d7 19.♘b3 ♘e5

Somewhat better was 19...♕e5, though after 20.♖c7 ♖fd8 21.e3 ♕xd5 22.♖xa7 White would enjoy a pleasant advantage.

20.♘d4 ♖fc8

This is a serious error in an already very difficult position.

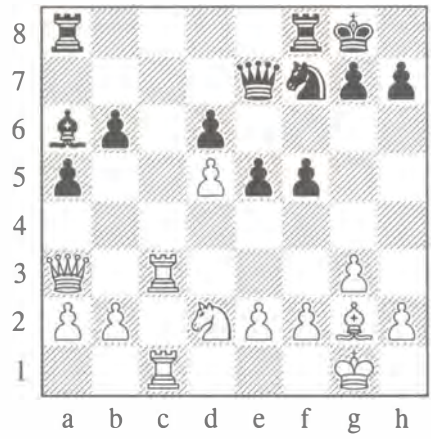
21.♖xc8† ♖xc8 22.♖xc8† ♗xc8 23.♘b5

White won a pawn in Kazhgaleyev – Izeta Txabarri, Cannes 1999.

C3233) 17...a5

Black insists on playing ...♗a6.

18.♖fc1 ♗a6



19.♖c7 ♕f6 20.e3

Certainly White has no intention of allowing Black any counterplay along the f-file, as might happen after 20.e4 f4.

20...e4 21.♘b3 ♕e5

It looks as if Black has managed to trick his opponent and is winning the d-pawn, but Tkachiev executes a wonderful positional idea.

22.♘d4 ♕xd5 23.f4!

Taking control over the e5-square and completely restricting the black knight. Strategically, Black's position is very difficult and in the game he failed to put up serious resistance.

23...♘h6

I believe 23...♖ac8 was more tenacious, but even so after 24.♕a4! Black is doomed to passivity.

24.♖1c6 ♖ac8 25.♕c3 ♖xc7 26.♖xc7 ♖f7 27.♖c6

There are many ways White could end Black's resistance, but the moves in the game are quite elegant:

27...♕xa2



28.h3!

White consistently restricts Black's knight, denying it the active g4-square. Black's position is hopeless.

28...♕b1† 29.♔f2!

Accuracy till the end! 29.♔h2 would allow Black to complicate matters with 29...♖f6! creating the mating idea of ...♘g4† followed by ...♖h6.

29...♕d3 30.♕c1!

Black's queen is trapped on d3 and there is no defence against 31.♖c3 that does not allow 31.♗f1, so Black resigned in Tkachiev – Korchnoi, Biel 2002. I witnessed this game live and it made a deep impression on me, especially taking into account that Tkachiev played this game with one eye, after being beaten up two days before by some criminal in a bar.

Conclusion:

The 4...♕e7 line is the most important variation of the solid and respectable Bogo-Indian. With accurate play White retains an edge, but it is important that he is well prepared, as it would be easy to become confused by the various transpositional possibilities.

Chapter 5

Budapest Gambit



Fajarowicz Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘e4?!

4.a3

A) 4...b6 60
B) 4...♘c6 62
C) 4...♕h4 63
D) 4...d6 64

A) note to 6...a5



8.♕c2!

A) after 10...a4



11.♖c1!

D) after 6...♘c6



7.♘h4!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘e4?!

This dubious variation is rarely seen at grandmaster level. The only value of this line might be as a surprise weapon to catch the unwary. When a player prepares his opening repertoire with White, the Fajarowicz is just the kind of line that might be skipped in the belief that no Black player will risk it, and then suddenly White has to start thinking on move 4!

4.a3



White has a few ways of obtaining an advantage, but I believe the text move is the easiest one. White takes control of the b4-square and prepares to challenge Black's knight with ♕c2.

The main alternative is 4.♘f3 with the idea that 4...♘c6 5.a3 transposes to 4.a3, but then Black has an important alternative in 4...♗b4†, when there is a lot of theory, though White's chances look preferable to me.

After 4.a3 Black has many options, so we shall dedicate more space to this gambit than it deserves. The main options are: **A) 4...b6**, **B) 4...♘c6**, **C) 4...♕h4** and **D) 4...d6**.

4...♗c5 5.e3 d6 also exists (but not 5...♘c6? losing material to 6.♕d5). After 6.♗d3 Black struggles to support his knight on e4, leaving White clearly better.

A) 4...b6

This is Black's best option according to Gutman's book on the Fajarowicz variation. But it is hard to believe Black can give away a central pawn and then play so calmly.

5.♘f3 ♗b7 6.♘bd2



6...a5

This typical move was suggested as the best option by Moskalenko in *The Fabulous Budapest Gambit*. Black has a couple of alternatives:

6...♘c5 7.b4 ♘e6 8.♗b2 d6 (Or 8...a5 9.b5 d6 10.exd6 ♗xd6 11.g3 would lead to more or less the same position.) And now White should continue: 9.exd6 (instead of 9.♘b3 as was played in S. Hartmann – W. Stein, Germany 2003) 9...♗xd6 10.g3 The bishop will be much better on g2 than it would be on e2. 10...0–0 11.♗g2 a5 12.b5 ♘d7 13.0–0 ♘dc5 Black has a nice square for his knight, but it is not enough to give real compensation. 14.♕c2 ♕e7 15.e3± White can gradually improve his position with ♖fe1, ♖ad1 and then play ♘d4 at a suitable moment.

6...♘xd2 7.♗xd2

Now Gutman recommends:

7...♕e7

7...♘c6 8.♗c3 ♕e7 was played in Kreiling – Jaeck, Wiesbaden 1998, and now 9.♕c2 would just transpose to 7...♕e7.

Now, after a simple developing move it is not easy to see what Black can do.



8.♕c2!

Gutman only gives 8.♗c3 g6 and then Black perhaps gets some play, though I have no doubt White is still better even here.

8...♘c6

Black cannot play 8...g6?. It runs into 9.♗g5! ♕e6 10.♗f6. Black's position is hopeless.

9.♗c3 0–0–0 10.0–0–0 ♕e6 11.e3 ♗e7 12.♗e2

You would need to be Lev Gutman to believe that Black has anything for the pawn in this position.

7.♘xe4 ♗xe4 8.♗f4

This is much stronger than 8.♕d4 as Black replies 8...♗b7 and will continue with the manoeuvre ...♘a6-c5 when the queen looks vulnerable on d4.

8...♘a6

After 8...♗e7 9.e3 ♘a6 (or 9...♘c6 10.♗d3±) 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 (if 10...♗b7 then 11.0–0 ♘c5 12.♗c2 a4 13.♘d4 is clearly better for White) 11.♕xd3 ♘c5 12.♕c2 0–0 13.0–0 a4 14.♖ad1± Black has no compensation for the pawn.

9.g3

The alternative 9.♘d4 ♘c5 10.f3 ♗b7 11.e4 a4 seems less convincing, though I am pretty sure White is still better.

9...♘c5 10.♗g2

Instead 10.b3 ♗e7 11.♗g2 d6 would allow Black some counterplay.

10...a4



11.♖c1!

Certainly White should avoid the following line: 11.0–0 ♘b3 12.♖a2 ♗c5 13.♘d2 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 g5 15.♗e3 ♗xe3 16.fxe3 ♖a5! 17.♘xb3 axb3 18.♕xb3 ♕e7 Black does have compensation in this case.

11...♗e7

Now White can comfortably meet 11...♘b3 with 12.♖c3.

12.0–0 0–0 13.♘d4 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 f6 15.♘f3

I do not see any real compensation for the pawn, for example:

15...♔h8 16.♕c2 fxe5 17.♗xe5 d6 18.♖cd1 ♕d7 19.♗c3±

Black has no compensation.

B) 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 d6

This is supposed to be the main line, but in my opinion it is completely unacceptable for Black; White gains a huge advantage.

Black's alternative is also uninspiring:
5...a5 6.♕c2 d5
6...♘c5 7.♘c3 as in Neverov – Pletanek, Pardubice 1992, should just be a pawn up for White, although Gutman in his book *Budapest Fajarowicz* still believes in Black's position after 7...h6. A funny move – Black is not worried about anything... Now I like 8.♗e3 ♘e6 9.g3 with an extra pawn and a positional advantage.
7.e3
Black's extra move ...a7-a5 proves to be absolutely useless.
7...♗e6
7...♗g4? loses to 8.cxd5 ♕xd5 9.♗c4.
8.♘bd2 ♘c5
So far this is Grabarczyk – Vospernik, Pula 1998, and now simple chess is good enough:
9.♗e2 ♗e7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♖d1
White has a clear advantage, as Black has no compensation at all.

6.♕c2!



6...d5

Two other moves also deserve attention at this point.

6...♘c5 7.b4 ♘e6 8.exd6 ♗xd6 9.♗b2 (I like the text move more than 9.e3 a5 10.b5 ♘e5 when Black had some play in Marklund – Olsson, Sweden 2006) 9...0–0 10.e3 Black had no compensation in Spraggett – Milla de Marco, Madrid 2000. 10.♘bd2!? is also worth a look.

After 6...♗f5?! 7.♘c3! White is clearly better everywhere (less strong is 7.♘bd2 ♘xd2 8.♕xf5±). I analysed the following lines:

a) 7...♘xc3 8.♕xf5 ♘a4 9.g3 (9.♗f4 should also be good) 9...♗e7 10.♕c2 ♘c5 11.b4 ♘e6 12.exd6 cxd6 13.♗g2 White was simply a pawn up in Smejkal – P. Popovic, Novi Sad 1976.

b) 7...♘g3? 8.e4!
This is the point of 6.♕c2. Now Black has two options; in both lines he manages to win an exchange, but this is a temporary achievement, since White will capture his knight in a few moves:
8...♘xh1
Or 8...♗xe4 9.♘xe4 ♘xh1 10.♗g5 (not 10.g3 dxe5!) 10...♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.exd6 cxd6 13.0–0–0 White will continue 14.♗d3 with a big advantage, as Black cannot rescue his knight from h1.
9.exf5 dxe5
The other capture is no better: 9...♘xe5 10.♘xe5 (10.♗e3 with the idea of 11.0–0–0 is also strong) 10...dxe5 11.♗e3 (11.g3!?) 11...♕h4 12.0–0–0 ♗e7 In Hamrakulova – Mourut, Oropesa del Mar 2000, White should have played 13.♗d3 ♕xh2 14.♘d5 ♗d8 15.♘xc7†! ♗xc7 16.♕a4† ♔f8 17.♕b4† ♔g8 18.♕xb7 with a decisive advantage.
10.♗e3 ♗e7
After 10...♘d4 11.♕e4 ♘xf3† 12.gxf3 c6

13.f4 Black was lost in V. Georgiev – Olgag, Izmir 2006.

11.♖d1 ♕c8 12.♘d5

In S. Ford – Penoyer, California 1992, Black was totally helpless against White's plan, which includes g2-g3 and ♗g2. White could even play ♕e4, ♗d3, and ♔e2.

c) 7...♘xf2 8.♕xf5 ♘xh1 9.e6 The black knight cannot escape, therefore White's advantage is indisputable (also good enough is 9.g3 g6 10.♕e4 ♗g7 11.exd6† ♔f8 12.♗g2). 9...fxe6 (or 9...♕e7 10.exf7† ♕xf7 11.♕xf7† ♔xf7 12.g3 followed by 13.♗g2) 10.♕xe6† ♕e7 (or 10...♗e7 11.g3) 11.♕d5! Black cannot castle in view of ♗g5. There is also no defence against the idea of g2-g3 and ♗g2, Reshevsky – Bisguier, New York 1955.

7.e3

Less clear is 7.♘c3 ♘xc3 8.♕xc3 d4.

7...♗g4

After 7...♗e6 8.♘bd2 ♘xd2 9.♗xd2 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♗xc4 11.♕xc4 in Fokin – Beltugov, Russia 2000, White had a clear extra pawn, as it will be defended with ♗c3.

7...♗f5 8.♗d3 ♗g6 was played in N.V. Pedersen – Slisser, Dieren 2004, and here I believe the best continuation is 9.♘bd2 ♘xd2 10.♗xd2 dxc4 11.♗xg6 hxg6 12.♕xc4, followed by ♗c3 with a clear advantage.

8.cxd5 ♕xd5 9.♗c4 ♕a5†

Now White has two advantageous lines, luckily the strongest is also the most practical:

10.♘bd2!

This is by far the simplest way. More complicated, but eventually also in White's favour, is 10.b4 ♗xb4† 11.axb4 ♕xa1 12.♕xe4, and now my analysis continues for another page. There is no need for any of this.



10...♗xf3

Or 10...♘xd2 11.♗xd2 and Black is a pawn down and has a lousy position. For example: 11...♕c5 12.b4 ♕e7 (or 12...♕b6 13.♗xf7† ♔xf7 14.♕c4† collecting the loose bishop) Now White decides the game with the nice 13.♗a6!.

11.gxf3 ♘xd2 12.♗xd2 ♕xe5

The same tactic reappears after 12...♗b4 13.0–0–0 ♗xd2† 14.♖xd2 ♕xe5 when 15.♗a6! is a winner.

13.♗c3

White's advantage was already decisive in Fuzishawa – Borwell, corr. 2004. Black is lagging behind in development and White's initiative is deadly.

C) 4...♕h4

Black brings his queen out immediately, tempted by the threat of mate. The popularity of this line is surprising, as the queen is awkwardly placed.

5.g3 ♕h5

After the natural development of the bishop (White has other options as well) White has a clear advantage in every line, since the black queen does not have a safe square. White will win a few tempos to develop his pieces.

6.♗g2 ♕xe5 7.♘f3

If the reader wishes a back-up plan then 7.♕c2!? is also reasonable.



After 7.♘f3 let's check every plausible retreat:

7...♕f6 8.♕c2 ♘c5 9.♘c3 ♘e6 10.0–0 (or 10.♘d5 ♕d8) 10...♘c6 11.♘d5 ♕d8 12.b4 ♗e7 13.♗b2 0–0 14.♖ad1White had a dream position in Yrjola – P. Fossan, Gausdal 1988.

7...♕c5 8.♘d4 (also interesting is 8.0–0!? with the idea of 8...♕xc4 9.♗f4 with a fine initiative) 8...♘d6? (or 8...♘c6 9.♗e3±, so Black should try 8...♘f6 although White is better) In Effert – Brandics, Kecskemet 1990, White could have won on the spot with 9.♗d5! (threatening 10.b4 followed by 11.c5) 9...♘xc4 10.♘b3 ♕b5 11.♘c3 ♕a6 12.♕d4 ♘d6 13.♕e5 With a decisive attack.

7...♕a5† 8.♘bd2 ♗c5? This is Pelletier – Flunkert, France 1994, and now White missed the simple 9.b4 ♗xb4 10.axb4 ♕xa1 11.♘xe4 with a decisive material advantage.

7...♕e7 8.0–0 d6 9.♘d4 c6 10.b4 (10.♗f4 was also strong) 10...g6 11.♗b2 ♘f6 (11...♗g7 loses to 12.♘xc6! and the bishop is hanging on g7) 12.♘c3 ♗g7 13.b5 c5 14.♘c2 0–0 15.♘e3 White has gradually improved his position, and has a clear positional advantage due to the weak spot on d5, Kutirov – Kurajica, Strumica 1995.

7...♕h5 This is the best square available. 8.♕c2 ♘f6 9.♘c3 There is no doubt White is clearly better. 9...d6 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.h4 0–0 12.0–0–0 White had a very promising position in Babula – Ramik, Czech Republic 1998.

D) 4...d6

Black's best move order.

5.♘f3

Simple development works fine. Instead 5.♕c2 is met with 5...♘c5.

5...♗f5

Anticipating 6.♕c2. The pawn capture has yet to be tested in tournament practice: 5...dxe5N 6.♕xd8† ♔xd8 7.♘xe5 ♗e6 8.e3 (Less clear is 8.g3 ♗d6 [inaccurate is 8...♘c5 9.♘d2 ♗d6 10.♘ef3 when White is better] 9.♗g2 ♗xe5 10.♗xe4 ♘c6 and Black has some activity.) 8...♗d6 9.♘f3 White keeps a healthy extra pawn.

5...♘c6 transposes to the 4...♘c6-line.

6.g3 ♘c6

In Volume 8 of *SOS*, GM Artur Kogan quotes the game Levin – Gutman, Germany (ch) 2001, which continued: 6...h5 7.♗g2 ♘c6 8.♘d4 ♘xd4 9.♕xd4 ♘c5 10.♕e3 dxe5 11.b4 (Gutman recommends 11.♕xe5! but Levin's move is also fine) 11...♘e6 12.♗b2 f6 13.♗xb7 ♖b8 And now instead of 14.♗e4 as in the game (which allowed the clever 14...♗c5!) the bold 14.♕xa7! refutes Black's play. Black has no tricks and if anything his king is more exposed than White's.

After 6...♘c6 at first sight it seems Black has reasonable chances of gaining compensation,

but after a few minutes I found an effective antidote:



7.♘h4!

This is a clear improvement on previous over-the-board practice (I later found some games with 7.♘h4 in correspondence and e-mail chess). Actually the idea of 7.♘h4 is quite simple – White wins a few tempos to develop his pieces, while at the same time pushing back the black pieces.

After 7.exd6?! ♗xd6 8.♗e3 (or 8.♗g2 ♗c5!?) 8...♕f6 Black has decent compensation.

7...♗e6

7...♗d7 does not change the evaluation, as after 8.♗g2 ♘c5 9.b4 ♘e6 10.exd6 ♗xd6 (or 10...♕f6 11.♖a2 ♗xd6 12.♘d2± intending ♘e4) 11.♗b2 0–0 12.♘f3 White keeps everything under control and remains a clear pawn to the good.

8.♗g2 f5

After completing my initial analysis I discovered that Gutman in *Budapest Fajarowicz* had also noticed White's strong seventh move, but had drawn a different conclusion. Despite my respect for Gutman, I will choose to disagree with him on this point. I think my job of proving an advantage is easier than his of proving compensation – I believe in White's extra pawn!

My initial analysis went: 8...♘c5 9.b4 ♘d7 10.exd6 ♗xd6 11.♘d2 Defending the c4-pawn. 11...0–0 12.0–0 a5 13.b5 ♘ce5 14.♗b2 ♘c5 15.♕c2± White is simply a pawn up.

9.exf6 ♘xf6

Here I believe White has two clear paths to an advantage, instead of the passive 10.♘d2, which was examined in Gutman's book.

10.b3

The most natural continuation.

Also strong is 10.♘c3 ♗xc4 11.♕a4 ♗e6 (after 11...d5 12.b3 ♗a6 13.0–0 ♕d7 14.♗g5 White wins back the pawn with dividends) 12.♗xc6† bxc6 13.♕xc6† ♗d7 14.♕c4 c6 15.e4 with a clear advantage.

10...d5

If 10...♕d7 then 11.♘c3 0–0–0 12.♘d5 and White takes control of the d5-square when his advantage is undeniable.

11.cxd5 ♗xd5 12.♗xd5 ♕xd5 13.♕xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗b2 0–0–0 15.♘d2

Even an optimistic gambit fan should dislike Black's position, as White is a pawn up without any compensating activity for Black. Also good enough is 15.♘f3 with an advantage.

Conclusion:

White has a clear advantage after the calm 4.a3, as Black fails to prove any kind of compensation. The most playable line is 4...d6, since Black seems to be able to gain reasonable compensation after most continuations, therefore the strong move 7.♘h4 is important for the evaluation of the whole line. My verdict is that White is firmly in control against the Fajarowicz variation.

Chapter 6

Budapest Gambit

The Classical Variation



Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4

4.♘f3

A) 4...♗b4†?! 67

B) 4...♘c6 5.♗f4 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 68

B1) 6...f6 68

B2) 6...♕e7 7.e3! ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2 71

B21) 9...d6 72

B22) 9...b6 74

B23) 9...♗xd2† 76

B24) 9...0–0 78

B25) 9...a5! 81

C) 4...♗c5 5.e3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 0–0 7.♗e2 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.0–0 83

C1) 9...d6 84

C2) 9...a5 86

C3) 9...♖e8 86

B1) note to 9...d6



12.♘g5!N

C1) after 11...♘g4



12.h3!N

C3) after 12...♘g6



13.♕d3!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4

This is the starting position of the Budapest Gambit. At the beginning of the 20th century the Budapest was played by the world elite, such as Vidmar, Mieses and Schlechter. Nowadays only a few grandmasters play this opening regularly: Mamedyarov (mostly in rapid chess), Miezis and of course Viktor Moskalenko, who has published a lot of analysis on the Budapest.

4.♘f3

This is White's most common reply. Why do I recommend this line? Firstly, because this move is objectively strong and leads to an advantage for White. Secondly, I believe the style of play that usually develops after 4.♘f3 is not what Black expects when choosing the Budapest Gambit – certainly he is dreaming of active piece play for the sacrificed pawn, with many tactical possibilities. Instead we choose to return the pawn and switch to more positional play, with a small but stable advantage for White.

The main alternative is 4.♗f4. The problem with this move is that Black gains some additional options (not only to go for our main line after 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 and so on) such as 4...d6 5.exd6 ♕f6, or 4...g5!? 5.♗g3 ♗g7, which I think looks quite reliable for Black.

After 4.♘f3, besides Black two main replies, there is a minor line that briefly requires our attention: **A) 4...♗b4†?!**. Main are **B) 4...♘c6** and **C) 4...♗c5**, which we will look at below. But first:

A) 4...♗b4†?!

This does not look like a serious move.

5.♘c3 ♕e7

Or 5...♘c6 6.♗g5 ♗e7 7.♗f4± is simply bad for Black.

Black's other try is no better:

5...♗xc3† 6.bxc3 ♕e7

Black's intention is to transpose to a line from the 4.♗f4 variation, but White has a strong reply:

7.♕d4!

It will prove useful for White to provoke ...h7-h5. Other moves are less clear:

7.♗g5 ♕a3 8.♕c1 ♕c5 and Black regains the pawn.

Also 7.♗f4 ♘c6 transposes to a line I do not recommend for White, as Black has compensation.

7...h5

Black is much worse after 7...f5?! 8.♗f4 ♘c6 9.♕d5 ♕a3 10.♖c1 followed by 11 h3.

8.♗f4 ♘c6 9.♕d5 f6 10.exf6 ♘xf6 11.♕d3

We have arrived at a position from the line 4.♗f4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗b4† 6.♘c3 ♗xc3 7.bxc3 ♕e7 8.♕d5 f6 9.exf6 ♘xf6 10.♕d3 with one serious difference – Black has the extra move ...h7-h5, which definitely weakens the black king's position, especially if he castles kingside. This makes the line virtually unplayable for Black.



6.♗d2!N

Very simple and at the same time very strong; 6.♕d4 h5 is less clear.

6...♘xe5

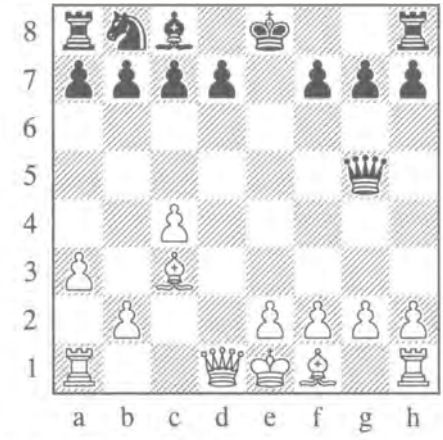
Instead 6...♗xc3 7.♗xc3 ♘c6 8.♕d5 is clearly in White's favour, as Black is forced to play 8...f6 because 9.h3 is threatened.

7.♘xe5 ♕xe5 8.a3 ♗xc3

After 8...♗c5 9.♘d5! followed by 10.♗c3, Black has serious problems.

9.♗xc3 ♕g5

Here White has a very smooth idea:



10.h4 ♕h6 11.♖h3!

The white rook transfers to the 3rd rank with great effect.

11...d6

11...0–0 is strongly met by 12.♖g3 f6 13.♕d5† ♔h8 14.h5! and White will either win material after 15.♗d2, or push h5-h6, which would create a decisive attack.

12.♖g3 ♖g8 13.♖e3† ♗e6 14.♕b3 b6 15.g3

White will continue 16.♗g2 and 0–0–0 when his advantage is undisputable.

With this out of the way, let's turn to the more theoretical lines.

B) 4...♘c6

Recently this has been second popular.

5.♗f4 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2

The play now splits depending on whether Black wants to sacrifice a pawn or regain material equality. The lines we shall study are **B1) 6...f6** and **B2) 6...♕e7**.

B1) 6...f6

A typical Budapest ploy; this move's over-the-board debut was in Rubinstein – Tartakower, Bad Kissingen 1928!

7.exf6 ♕xf6



8.e3

The aforementioned game continued 8.g3 ♕xb2 9.♗g2, but I prefer a plan based on developing the bishop on e2.

8...♕xb2 9.♗e2 d6

Castling immediately is also an option, but it leads Black into trouble:

9...0–0 10.0–0 d6

This is the first critical position of the 6...f6 variation. White's main problem is to choose the best move from many tempting continuations.

11.c5!

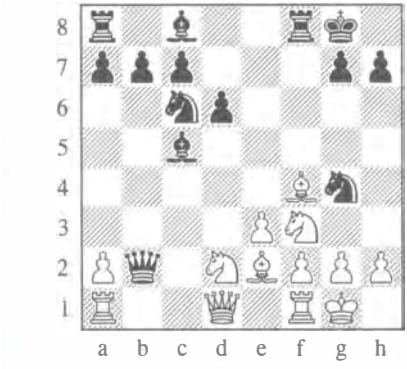
After having analysed this line for several hours I came to the conclusion that this is White's best option. The text allows White to

exploit the disharmony of the black pieces, as well as use the a2-g8 diagonal. Other options were: 11.♘b3, 11.♘e4 and 11.a3. The only practical test of 11.c5 continued:

11...♗xc5

Let's check out the other capture: 11...dxc5 12.♘c4 The perfect square for White's knight. 12...♕f6 13.a3 ♗a5 14.♘xa5 ♘xa5 15.♘g5! (Instead 15.♖c1 b6 16.♘g5 h6 17.♕d5† ♔h8 18.♕xa8 hxg5 19.♗xc7 ♗b7 20.♕xa7 ♕c6 leads to unnecessary complications; and 15.♗xc7 b6 16.h3 ♘h6 is only slightly better for White.) 15...h6 (after 15...♘e5 16.♕d5† ♘f7 White has the tactical blow 17.♘xh7! ♔xh7 18.♕xc5 and both the f8-rook and a5-knight are hanging, so White would remain a pawn up) 16.♕d5† ♔h8 17.♘e4 ♕f7 18.♕xf7 ♖xf7 19.♘xc5 White's chances are clearly preferable in this endgame, thanks to his pair of bishops.

The advance 11...d5?! is easy to dismiss: 12.♗xc7 gives White a healthy extra pawn.



12.♘g5!N

This is a serious improvement over Wiener – Raddatz, Pinneberg 1994, which continued 12.♖b1 ♕f6 13.♘e4 ♕e7 (worse is 13...♕f5?!, as it would allow White to seize the initiative after 14.♗d3 ♕h5 15.♘xc5 ♕xc5 16.♕b3† ♔h8 17.♘g5) 14.♘xc5 dxc5 15.♘g5. And now 15...♘f6 was the correct move with a rather unclear game.

12...h6

The tactics do not work for Black: 12...♖xf4? 13.exf4 ♗xf2† 14.♔h1 ♘e3 15.♗c4†! and next 16.♕h5 will decide.

13.♗c4† ♔h8 14.♘f7† ♖xf7

Instead 14...♔h7 loses after 15.h3 ♘ge5 16.♗xe5 ♘xe5 (or 16...dxe5 17.♖b1 ♕a3 18.♕h5 with a decisive attack) 17.♖b1 ♕c3 18.♖b3 ♕a5 19.♘xe5 dxe5 20.♖b5 ♕a3 21.♘b1 winning a piece.

15.♗xf7 ♗f5 16.♘c4 ♕f6 17.♗d5

Black does not have sufficient compensation for the exchange.

10.0–0 ♘ge5

This is the best try. The alternatives are much worse:

10...♘f6 11.c5! Here this typical move is extremely strong, since after: 11...d5 (not 11...♗xc5? 12.♘c4 when Black's queen is trapped) 12.♗xc7 ♗f5 (or 12...♗xc5 13.♖c1 ♗e7 14.♖c2 ♕b4 15.♘e5 would give White a clear positional edge playing against an isolated pawn) 13.♕b3 (13.♗d6 looks even stronger) 13...♕xb3 14.♘xb3 0–0 15.♘fd4 White was just a pawn up in Borisenko – Shaposhnikov, Riga 1954.

If instead:

10...♗f5

Then White has the usual strong move:

11.c5! ♗c2

11...♗xc5 loses after 12.♘h4! as now this move is possible since the d2-knight is no longer attacked. 12...♗e6 13.♖b1 ♕xa2 14.♗xg4 ♗xg4 15.♕xg4 ♕xd2 16.♖xb7 is hopeless for Black.

12.♕c1 ♕xc1

There is a nice variation after: 12...♗a3 13.cxd6 cxd6 (13...♕c3 14.♘b1! is a neat trick: 14...♗xc1 15.♘xc3 ♗b2 16.♘b5 and White wins material) 14.♘c4 ♕xc1 15.♖axc1 ♗xc1 16.♖xc1 ♗g6 17.♘xd6† ♔f8 18.♘xb7 White will launch a decisive attack

with his minor pieces.
13.♖axc1 ♗g6 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.♘c4 d5 16.♘d6† ♗xd6 17.♗xd6

Once again White has the bishop pair and a clear positional advantage.

10...♗d7 11.c5!N Yet again we see the same method. (11.a3!?) 11...♗xc5 (or 11...d5 12.♗xc7 ♗xc5 13.♖b1 ♕xa2 14.♖xb7 and soon Black is going to lose the d5-pawn) 12.♖b1 ♕xa2 (Instead 12...♕f6 13.h3 ♘ge5 14.♘e4 looks horrible for Black. Next White will capture on c5 and the b7-pawn is also falling.) 13.♘c4 (threatening 14.♖a1) 13...♘b4 14.♘d4! With the deadly threat of ♖a1.

This is the second critical moment. Again White has many attractive moves, but the best is a well-known idea by now:



11.c5!

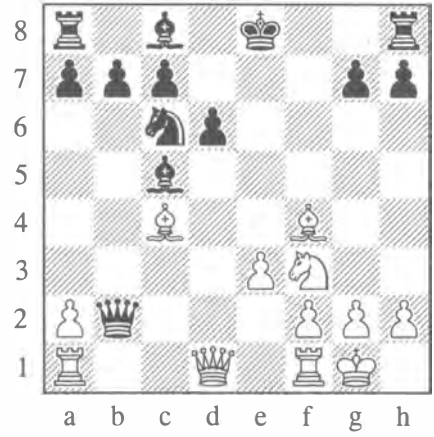
11.♖b1 might be interesting as well, but I am going with this fancy version of the move we have seen many times already.

11...♘xf3†

Much worse is 11...♗xc5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 (or 12...dxe5 13.♘c4 ♕c3 14.♖c1 ♕b4 15.a3 and the queen is trapped) 13.♖b1 ♕a3 14.♗xe5 dxe5 15.♗b5† c6 16.♕h5† with a decisive attack.

Or 11...dxc5 12.♘xe5 ♕xd2 (or 12...♘xe5 13.♘e4 ♘f7 14.♗c4 is hopeless for Black) 13.♗b5 ♕xd1 14.♖fxd1 ♗c3 15.♖ac1 ♗xe5 16.♗xe5 ♔f7 17.♗xc7 and the c5-pawn is falling next.

12.♘xf3 ♗xc5 13.♗c4!



White has a very strong initiative for the pawn; the following lines show the dangers of Black's position.

13...♗f5

If 13...♗g4 then 14.♖b1 ♕c3 15.♕d5 0–0–0 16.♗a6! is not so difficult, but quite a nice trick. After 16...bxa6 17.♕xc6 White has a clear advantage.

Or 13...h6 14.♘d4 ♗xd4 15.♖b1 ♕c3 16.♖c1 ♕b2 17.♕h5† ♔d8 18.exd4 and White's initiative looks very dangerous with the black king stuck in the centre.

14.♘h4!

14.♘g5 ♕f6 is less clear, though White keeps definite compensation in this case as well.

14...♗e4

The bishop can also retreat, but it would not help: 14...♗d7 15.♗g5! Preventing Black from castling long, as well as taking control of the

f6-square. There is no doubt White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn; the immediate threat is 16.♕h5.

It is important to note that White can launch a decisive attack after: 15...♘e5 16.♖b1 ♕c3 17.♖c1 ♕b2 18.♖c2 ♕b4 19.♕h5† g6 20.♕h6 Followed by 21.♕g7.

Instead W. Schiller – P. Rosso, e-mail 2005, continued 15...g6 and now instead of 16.♖b1 as in the game, also interesting is 16.♕d5N ♕g7 17.f4!? and Black faces a massive attack.

15.♕g4 d5 16.♗xd5

Less clear is 16.♕e6† ♘e7.

16...♗xd5 17.♕h5† ♗f7 18.♕xc5 ♕f6

18...0–0–0 19.♘f5! is better for White, due to his much better-placed pieces (bishop and knight) and his attacking chances against the black king. Instead after 19.♖ab1 ♕xa2 20.♕b5 ♕a6 21.♕f5† ♖d7 22.♖fd1 ♗e8 Black somehow holds.



19.♕b5! 0–0 20.♘f3

Black's pawns on b7 and c7 are both under attack.

20...♖fc8

This is the only reliable defence. Black keeps material equality, but White still has positional pressure.

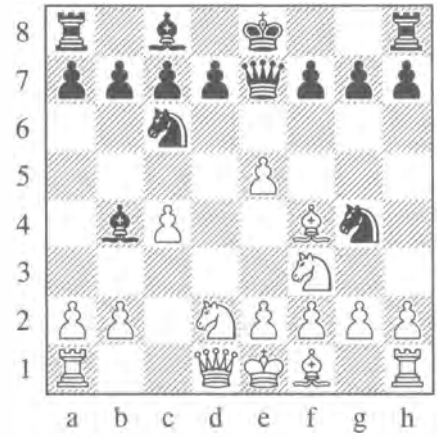
21.♖fd1

21.♕xb7 does not work, because Black has 21...♗c4 followed by 22...♖ab8.

21...♖ab8 22.♘g5

And White has a pleasant advantage thanks to his dominant pieces.

B2) 6...♕e7



7.e3!

To tell the truth, before writing this book I had never seriously analysed this opening. At first I did not know which move to recommend here, since 7.a3 and 7.e3 look pretty similar, and should lead to the same type of middlegame. Finally I came to the conclusion that the text is stronger and the reason is rather simple – after 7.a3 Black has an interesting set-up that promises him good counterplay. Even though it is not part of our repertoire, it is worth understanding the following line:

7.a3 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5

Of course not 8.axb4?? ♘d3#.

8...♘xe5 9.e3 ♗xd2† 10.♕xd2 d6 11.♗e2

After 11.b4 even 11...♗e6 12.♖c1 (12.c5 0–0–0 is possible as well, with complicated play) 12...0–0–0!? comes into consideration.

11...b6

This looks quite playable for Black; a recent game continued:

12.b4 ♗b7 13.0–0 ♘g6 14.♗g3 h5!

The point of Black's set-up; he starts his counterplay on the kingside, while castling long remains an option.

15.c5

White has also tried other moves, but I failed to find a clear way to an advantage.

15...dxc5

Also after 15...h4 16.cxd6 ♕d7 17.♗f4 ♘xf4 18.exf4, as in Beltran Rueda – Moskalenko, Barcelona 2007, Black could have played 18...0–0–0 with roughly equal play.

16.bxc5 h4

Black has good play.

7...♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2

This is the real starting point of the 7.e3 line.

Black's play in this line is often based on the following strategic ideas: Black has to solve the problem of his dark-squared bishop, and in many lines he is forced to exchange it for the knight. Black's aim should be to achieve some positional trumps from this exchange, such as fixing White's pawn structure after a2-a3 ...♗xd2, ♕xd2 ...a5-a4, or damaging White's pawn structure on the queenside. Thus Black should advance his a-pawn quickly.



Black now has a choice between no fewer than five serious lines. We shall look at **B21) 9...d6**, **B22) 9...b6**, **B23) 9...♗xd2†**, **B24) 9...0–0** and **B25) 9...a5!**.

Before getting to the main lines, we can quickly dismiss a less serious move:

9...♕d6?!

I believe this is Black's worst option.

10.a3 ♗xd2† 11.♕xd2 ♕xd2† 12.♔xd2

This is the most White can achieve in this line. He not only has the two bishops, but also an important tempo to play c4-c5 on the next move, restricting Black's pawn chain on the queenside.

12...f6

Or 12...d6 13.c5 ♘g6 14.♗g3 dxc5 15.♗xc7 and White has a stable edge with the bishop pair.

13.c5 b6 14.♖ac1 ♔d8 15.♖hd1

With a clear edge, once again due to the advantage of the two bishops, Gladyszev – Ezsol, Budapest 1999.

B21) 9...d6 10.0–0



This brings us to two interesting options:

10...♗d7

With the idea of meeting 11.♘b3 with 11...♗a4.

There is also 10...0–0, which should not have independent value, as Black should not vary with: 11.♘b3 b6?! (here Black should play 11...♖e8, reaching a position examined in the 9...0–0 10.0–0 ♖e8 line) 12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘xc5 bxc5 (13...dxc5? loses to 14.♕d5) 14.b4! White had the desired play on the queenside in Karpov – Short, Linares (1) 1992.

11.a3 ♗xd2

As pointed out by Epishin, 11...♗c5 12.♘e4 ♗c6 13.♘c3 is better for White.

12.♕xd2 f6 13.b4



13...0–0–0!?N

A very interesting idea that was mentioned by Moskalenko in his book. There is no doubt this move is more appealing than the options covered below, but I still like White's position.

In Ivanchuk – Epishin, Terrassa 1991 Black played:

13...♖d8

In general, White would keep a stable advantage, but in this particular case he managed to find a tactical solution:

14.♗h5†! ♘f7

The two alternatives are both unacceptable: 14...g6 15.♗e2, as the weakening of the kingside should tell in the long term, and 14...♘g6 15.c5 ♗b5 16.♖fc1 dxc5 17.♕a2! when the position opens up in White's favour.

15.c5 ♗b5 16.♖fd1 d5 17.e4!

White obtained a clear advantage.

Another of Moskalenko's suggestions is the rather dubious-looking:

13...h5N

White will play:

14.e4!

He should not worry about his e4-pawn, and play will continue in the same way as in the 13...0–0–0 variation, only with equal material. Here is my brief analysis:

14...h4

After 14...g5 15.♗e3 ♘g4 16.♗d4! White keeps both bishops with an obvious advantage.

15.f3

White's idea is to neutralize Black's activity on the kingside (premature would be 15.h3 g5 16.♗e3?! g4 when Black is in the game.

15...h3 16.g4

My iron friend does not appreciate this idea, as White seems to be weakening his kingside pawn formation. In fact I can hardly imagine how Black might break through on the kingside, while White's play on the queenside develops quickly and easily

Worse is 16.g3 g5 17.♗e3 g4 with counterplay.

16...0–0–0 17.b5

And White seizes the initiative on the queenside, while I do not see any real counterplay for Black.

14.e4!

Although this move is connected with a pawn sacrifice, it is essential for White to keep his dark-squared bishop alive. Obviously Black was threatening to play ...g7-g5, when White would face a dilemma – either to give up his dark-squared bishop, or to allow Black

counterplay on the kingside after, let's say, ♗g3 ...h7-h5, and so on.

14...♘g6

Black has to accept the challenge, as otherwise White will get a free initiative on the queenside.

15.♗e3 ♕xe4 16.f3!

White has very promising play. The text move is essential, as other options are weaker: 16.♖fe1?! ♘h4 17.f3 ♕g6 hands the initiative to Black, and 16.♗xa7 ♖he8 17.♗d3 ♕h4 18.♗e3 ♘e5 gives him counterplay.

16...♕h4

Let's check out another queen move: 16...♕e6 17.♖fe1 (strangely enough 17.♗xa7 b6 18.c5 ♔b7 19.cxb6 cxb6 20.♕d3 ♔xa7 21.♕a6† ♔b8 22.♕xb6† ♔a8 is enough only for a draw, as I failed to find a decisive idea for White) 17...♔b8 18.a4 (18.b5!?) 18...♖he8 19.♗f1 (threatening ♗xa7) 19...♘e5 20.♕f2 White has the initiative.

17.♖fe1 ♔b8 18.a4 ♖he8 19.a5

Once again White seizes the initiative, while I fail to see Black's counterplay.

19...♗e6 20.b5 ♘e5 21.♗f2 ♕h6 22.♕d4 c5 23.bxc6 ♘xc6 24.♕b2 ♔a8 25.♗d3

And White is much better; his attacking ideas include a5-a6 followed by ♗e4.

B22) 9...b6 10.0–0 ♗xd2

Black may also decide not to exchange on d2:

10...♗b7 11.♘b3

Less convincing for White is: 11.♘f3 ♘xf3† 12.♗xf3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 0–0 White can still cause a little trouble with: 14.♕b7! (14.♖fd1 ♗c5 was Hoffmann – Forintos, Muenster 1992) However it looks like Black holds after: 14...♖fc8 15.♖fd1 a5 16.a3 ♗c5 17.b4 ♖ab8 18.♕d5 axb4 19.axb4 ♗xb4 20.♕xd7 ♕xd7 21.♖xd7 ♗d6 (A couple of e-mail games varied at this point with 21...♖b7 and in both cases Black drew easily.) 22.♗xd6 cxd6 23.♖xd6 ♖xc4 24.♖xb6 ♖bc8 This endgame should be a draw.

11...a5

Black has an alternative, but no improvement: 11...0–0 12.a3 ♗c5 (Clearly inferior for Black is: 12...♗d6 13.♘d4 [threatening 14.♘f5] 13...♕f6 14.♘b5± Black has to give up his bishop on d6, which will damage his pawn structure, Candela Perez – Gabriel y Galan Acevedo, Villalba 1995.) 13.♘xc5 bxc5 14.b4 Again White manages to open up the queenside. 14...♖ab8 15.bxc5 ♕xc5 16.♕d4 ♕c6 17.f3 With a pleasant edge for White, thanks to his bishop pair, Delgado – Martinez, Spain 1992.

12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘xc5 bxc5 14.b4

It is important to create play on the queenside.

14...f6 15.bxc5 ♕xc5 16.♕d4

White keeps a pleasant edge, as his dark-squared bishop is starting to work, Solozhenkin – Plesec, Paris 1993.

11.♕xd2 ♗b7

One of the benefits of our chosen line appears after Black's alternative move:

11...d6

The same set-up that worked perfectly for Black after 7.a3 does not achieve its goal here, because White has not wasted a tempo on a2-a3, so the c4-c5 advance lands one move earlier, which makes a big difference.

12.b4

Even 12.♗xe5 dxe5 13.♗f3 is slightly better for White. For instance: 13...♖b8 14.♗c6† ♗d7 15.♕d5 ♗xc6 16.♕xc6† ♕d7 17.♕e4 ♕e6 18.♖fd1± and White will control the d-file after doubling rooks.

12...♘g6

Gleizerov – Trkaljanov, Skopje 1993,

continued: 12...♗b7 13.c5 dxc5 14.bxc5 0–0 15.♕c3 f6 16.♖ac1 White was clearly better in view of his strong bishops and the unpleasant tension Black faces along the c-file.

13.♗g3 h5 14.c5

Compared to the 7.a3 line, Black's bishop has yet to reach b7, and this factor is vital.

14...dxc5

So far this is Pein – Svidler, London 1991. Here White could have played:

15.♕d5 ♖b8 16.♕c6† ♗d7

After 16...♕d7 17.♕xc7 ♕xc7 18.♗xc7 ♖b7 19.♗d6 Black is lost.

17.♕xc7 ♖c8 18.♕xa7 h4 19.♗c7

White keeps his extra pawn.



12.c5!?

Too slow is 12.♖ac1?! d6 13.b4 ♘g6 14.♗g3 h5! and Black is just in time to create counterplay. But 12.♕c3 is a worthy alternative.

12...bxc5 13.♕a5 ♘g6

This is the critical continuation. The other lines are simpler:

13...d6?! 14.♗xe5 dxe5 (not 14...♕xe5? 15.♕b5† winning the bishop) 15.♖ac1 and Black ends up with a strategically lost position.

13...f6 14.♖ac1 d6 15.b4 and White breaks through on the queenside.



14.♗g3!

I found this "novelty" and then discovered it has been played in one e-mail game. In my opinion it is a serious improvement over previous over-the-board play.

In a few games White has reacted unsuccessfully with 14.♕xc7 ♘xf4 15.♕xf4 0–0 and Black has a defendable position.

Black would gain counterplay after:

14.♗xc7 ♘h4! 15.♖fc1

Retreating the bishop is not a complete solution either: 15.♗g3 ♘xg2 (clearly worse is 15...0–0 16.♗xh4 ♕xh4 17.♕xc5 ♖fc8 18.♕b5 when White is simply a pawn up) 16.♖ac1 ♘h4 17.♕xc5 ♘f3† 18.♗xf3 ♗xf3 Black's light-squared bishop should give him sufficient counterplay.

15...♕e4 16.f3 ♕xe3† 17.♔f1 0–0 18.♖xc5 ♖fe8 19.♖e1 d6

With unclear play.

14...d6

Black has no time for 14...h5? 15.♕xc7 ♗c6 16.♗d6 ♕g5 17.e4! and White is winning, as 17...♗xe4 loses to 18.♗f3 and Black will unavoidably lose material.

15.b4 cxb4

Instead 15...0–0 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.♖fc1 leaves White with a clear positional advantage.

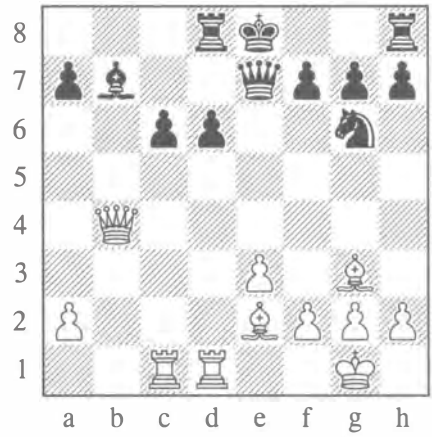
16.♖ac1 c6

Worse is 16...♖c8?! 17.♕xa7 ♗a8 18.♖fd1 0–0 19.♗a6 with a decisive advantage for White.

17.♕xb4 ♖d8

A clear mistake would be 17...c5? 18.♕b5† ♕d7 19.♗xd6 and White wins.

18.♖fd1



18...d5

Black has somehow managed to keep his extra pawn; meanwhile White has gained some positional pluses, such as the two bishops, clear targets on the queenside, and the opponent's badly placed pieces. These factors add up to excellent compensation for the pawn.

19.♖d4

19.♖b1 ♗a8 20.♗b8 ♖d7 is less clear.

19...0–0 20.♕xe7 ♘xe7 21.♖a4 a6

Black can try 21...♘c8, but after 22.♗e5, with the idea of putting the bishop on d4, the overall evaluation is unchanged.

22.♖b4 ♖d7 23.♗d3

I believe that, despite his extra pawn, Black is going to suffer for a long time. Also, White has the safety net that it would be easy to regain the pawn (by taking the a6-pawn, for example). I would not be surprised if the reader found a better way to seize the initiative, as I have the feeling that White has many ideas.

B23) 9...♗xd2† 10.♕xd2 d6 11.0–0 0–0



According to theory this is the main position of this line, but in my opinion Black should avoid this variation. Indeed, Black has recently played this line less frequently. White has a stable advantage and his play is extremely easy. The c4-c5 break is simple to prepare and can hardly be avoided by Black. This allows White to increase the activity of his dark-squared bishop and to stabilize his advantage.

12.b4

The most natural continuation; White is simply better. For those who wish a back-up weapon, the following option is fun:

12.♕d5!?

This is an original move. The idea is to provoke Black into playing ...c7-c6, when the d6-pawn will become a clear target, as White can easily put pressure along the d-file.



12...♗e6

Obviously this is the critical test for 12.♕d5, but let's examine Black's other options all the same:

a) 12...♖b8? is just bad in view of 13.c5 and White achieves his goal without having to bother with b2-b4.

b) 12...♘g6 13.♗g3 ♖b8 Black defended against the c4-c5 break and is ready to stabilize his pawn structure with ...b7-b6, but now White comes round the other side: 14.♕a5! a6 15.c5 With an advantage.

c) 12...♖e8 Now the e5-knight is protected, so the c4-c5 break is not dangerous for Black. 13.♖fd1 Nevertheless, White's pressure is extremely annoying as now, for example, White is threatening 14.c5 once again, using the weakness of the 8th rank. 13...♘g6 (After 13...♗e6 14.♕xb7 ♖ab8 15.♕xa7 ♖xb2 16.♗f1 White has a much better version compared with 12...♗e6, as he gets a nice square for his light-squared bishop on f1.) 14.♗g3 ♖b8 And once again White has the same trick: 15.♕a5! ♖a8 16.c5 dxc5 17.♕xc7 ♕xc7 18.♗xc7 With a very pleasant endgame due to the two bishops, Cosma – Kaposztas, Hungary 1996.

d) If Black simply plays 12...c6 then after 13.♕d2 f6 14.e4 White has a pleasant position, though Black is pretty solid.

13.♕xb7 ♖ab8

After 13...♗xc4 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.♖ac1 ♖fb8 16.♕c6 ♘xb2 (worse is 16...♘e5 17.♗xe5 ♕xe5 18.b3 and Black is suffering with all his weaknesses on the queenside) 17.♕xc7 ♕xc7 18.♖xc7 Black faces an unpleasant endgame. The best he can hope for is the nasty side of a "4 versus 3" endgame.

14.♕xa7 ♖xb2 15.♖fe1 ♘xc4

Instead 15...♗xc4 16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.♖ac1 d5 18.e4 does not bring Black relief either, as he is going to lose one of his pawns (c7 or d5).

Or 15...♖fb8 16.c5 ♕d8 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.a3! and White keeps his extra pawn.

16.♖ac1

White again wins a pawn, Gutow – Tsarukian, St Petersburg 2000.

12...♖d8

Black has a few options we should quickly scan:

12...♖e8 13.♖fd1 ♘g6?! It was better to keep the knight on e5. 14.♗g3 a5? 15.c5!± In Stohl – Manolov, Elenite 1992, White had a clear advantage, as his dark-squared bishop is springing to life.

12...♗e6 13.♕c3 f6 This is A. Smirnov – Miezis, Tallinn 2005, and here White should have continued according to his plan: 14.c5 dxc5 15.bxc5 ♗f7 16.a4 With a pleasant risk-free advantage.

12...b6 13.c5 ♗b7 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.a4 Black is suffering due to his weak d-pawn.

13.♕c3 f6 14.♖fd1 ♗f5 15.♖d2 ♗g6 16.♖ad1

White's chances are clearly preferable, as Black's passive position lacks any real counterplay, Bluvshtein – Miezis, Calvia (ol) 2004.

B24) 9...0–0 10.0–0



10...a5

Obviously 10...♗xd2 11.♕xd2 d6 transposes to the 9...♗xd2† line.

10...♖e8

This is an important line. Now I can offer a choice between two different positions:

a) 11.♘b3

This is worth a look because it is based on a different strategy from most of the lines we have looked at in this chapter.

11...d6



Here White has several options:

a1) 12.♕d5!?N

This new move seems interesting. By analogy with the 10...♗xd2 line, it is always useful for White to provoke ...c7-c6, which weakens the d6-pawn.

12...c6 13.♕d4 a5

After 13...♗f5 14.a3 ♗c5 White can try 15.♕c3!? (certainly 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♕c3 is also possible) 15...♗b6 16.♖fd1 and White is slightly better due to the weakness of d6.

14.a3 ♗c5 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♕c3

We have the same position as after 11.a3, with one small difference – Black has weakened the d6-square (after 11.a3 Black's pawn stands on c7), which clearly favours White, as he gains an additional square for his rooks to enter. Also, now White can easily improve his pawn structure with f3-e4, as Black no longer has the ...♘c6-d4 manoeuvre.

a2) Another option is: 12.♕c2 a5 (12...♗d7?! 13.a3 ♗c5 14.♘xc5 dxc5 15.b4 and opening the play on the queenside is clearly in White's favour) 13.♖ad1 (White can definitely play 13.a3 ♗c5 14.♘xc5 dxc5 getting the type of position we will examine after 12.a3) 13...a4 14.♘d4 a3 15.b3 ♗d7 Black has reasonable play as his dark-squared bishop is well-placed on b4, restricting White's play.

a3) 12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘xc5 dxc5 14.♕b3

I believe this move is stronger than the alternatives:

14.♕d5 ♘g6 15.♕f3 (We can see Black's idea in the following line: 15.♗g3 ♖d8 16.♕f3 ♖d2 with counterplay.) 15...a5 16.♖ad1 ♘xf4 And here a draw was agreed in Riazantsev – Korchnoi, Chelyabinsk 2007.

White does not achieve anything with 14.b4?! cxb4 15.axb4 ♕xb4 16.♗xe5 ♖xe5 17.♕d8† ♕f8 18.♕xc7 ♖c5 and Black is not worse.

14...b6

14...a5 is answered with 15.a4! fixing the pawn structure on the queenside to White's advantage.

15.♕c3 ♗b7 16.♖ad1 f6

The arising position resembles the Berlin variation. White has an extra pawn on the kingside, but Black is extremely solid with his strong knight on e5.

b) 11.a3

The most natural continuation.

11...♗xd2 12.♕xd2

The inclusion of the moves ...♖e8 and a2-a3 does not change the evaluation compared to the 9...♗xd2† line. White is always better with his pair of bishops. Here is a typical example of how the play might go on:

12...d6 13.b4 ♗f5 14.♖fd1

14.♖ac1 is also possible.

14...♖ad8 15.♕c3 f6



This position is from Nyback – Summerscale, West Bromwich 2004. Black has managed to temporarily defend against the c4-c5 advance, as he would meet it with ...d6-d5. Accordingly, White should not rush with c4-c5 (as happened in the game). He just needs to gradually improve his position first by doubling rooks on the d-file:

16.♖d2

Then he can make some more useful moves like ♗g3, h2-h3, a3-a4 (also, sometimes it might be possible to play f2-f3 and e3-e4) and finally, at an appropriate moment, push c4-c5. On the other hand, Black lacks any activity and just needs to wait passively.

Quite a popular option for Black is:

10...♘g6 11.♗g3 ♗d6 12.♗xd6 ♕xd6

Despite the exchange of bishops, White still keeps a pleasant edge, thanks to his space advantage.

13.♘e4



White is improving the position of his knight, as it was passively placed on d2. White's main alternative would be 13.♕c2, but I prefer the text.

13...♕e5

a) A possible retreat is 13...♕e7 14.♘c3 d6 when we reach a typical position for this variation. White has tried many different moves here, but I prefer the energetic play of German Grandmaster Jan Gustafsson: 15.♘d5!? ♕d8 16.♕d4 As we have noticed already, it is always useful for White to provoke ...c7-c6, which makes the d6-pawn a clear target. 16...c6 Sooner or later, Black has to play this move, as he cannot suffer White's knight in the centre indefinitely. 17.♘c3 ♕e7 18.♖ad1 ♖d8 19.f4! Now Black has to reckon with the idea of f4-f5-f6, opening up his king. 19...f5 Black decides to prevent White's potential threat, but now White switches to preparing e3-e4. 20.g3 (20.♖fe1 was a worthy alternative) 20...♘h8 This is Gustafsson – Lamprecht, Hamburg 1997, and now White should have continued energetically: 21.e4 ♘f7 22.♗h5 g6 23.♗f3 ♖e8 24.♖fe1 White is dominating.

b) No one has gone for the endgame after 13...♕xd1 14.♖fxd1 d6 for a rather obvious reason – White has a stable and risk-free advantage. He can select one of two plans: 15.c5 dxc5 16.♘xc5 c6 17.♖ac1 with pressure, or 15.♘c3 ♗e6 16.♖ac1 not changing the pawn structure.

14.♘c3

The best square for the knight. Later Black will face a dilemma: either be ready to deal with possible knight jumps to b5 and d5, attacking Black's pawns, or play ...c7-c6 covering both squares, but getting a permanent weakness on d6.

14...d6

14...b6 can be met by 15.♕d5 ♕xd5 16.♘xd5 c6 17.♘c3 and Black's d-pawn becomes a real target.

15.♕d2 ♗d7

Black can try to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative with: 15...♗a6 16.♕xe5! I think this is the best way (if White accepts the sacrifice with 16.♕xd7 then Black gets some counterplay: 16...♖ad8 17.♕a4 ♗b7 18.♖fd1 ♘h4 19.♖xd8 ♖xd8 20.♖d1 ♖f8! 21.e4 f5) 16...♘xe5 And here 17.f4!N was extremely strong (in Stohl – Blatny, Prague 1996, White opted for 17.♘d5). 17...♘xc4 (Otherwise 18.♘d5 comes with great effect, for example: 17...♘c6 18.♘d5 ♖ac8 19.b4! Black cannot avoid losing material.) 18.♖fc1 b5 19.♘d5 ♗b7 20.♗xc4! This is an improvement over Stohl's annotations in ChessBase (he analyses only 20.♘xc7). 20...bxc4 21.♘e7† ♔h8 22.♖xc4 Black will lose a pawn: 22...c6 (or 22...♖fe8 23.♖xc7 ♗xg2 24.♖xd7 ♗h3 25.f5 with a winning position) 23.♖d1 d5 24.♖c2 ♖fe8 25.♘xc6 ♖xe3 26.♖xd5 ♗xc6 27.♖xc6 ♖e2 28.♖dc5 g6 29.♖c2 ♖ae8 30.♔f1 This endgame should be winning for White.

16.♖ac1 ♖fe8?!

This is Shipov – Ang. Tzermiadianos, Athens 1997, and here White missed a great chance:.



17.♘d5 ♖ec8

Black cannot defend with 17...♖ac8? as after 18.f4 he loses a piece.

18.f4 ♕e8 19.f5

19.e4!? is also promising.

19...♘e7 20.f6 ♘xd5 21.cxd5

White has an attack.

11.a3

The alternative would be 11.♘b3, but after: 11...a4 12.a3 (12.♘d4 d6 would lead to a complicated game) 12...♗d6 (Or 12...♗c3!? 13.bxc3 axb3 14.♕xb3 d6 is also quite interesting, as Black has definite compensation for the pawn, in view of White's damaged pawn structure on the queenside.) 13.♘d2 f5 The play is rather unclear.

11...♗xd2

Black can also try to keep his bishop:

11...♗c5



But in this case White has a powerful idea:

12.b4! axb4 13.axb4 ♖xa1 14.♕xa1 ♘g6

Much worse is 14...♗xb4 15.♗xe5 ♗xd2 16.♗xg7 and Black will not survive with such a weak king.

15.♗xc7 ♗xe3

Or 15...♗xb4 16.♗a5 and White keeps a stable edge, as Black will suffer for the rest of the game, defending his weak pawns on b7 and d7.

16.fxe3 ♕xe3† 17.♖f2 ♕xd2 18.♕d1

White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn, as Black's light-squared bishop is out of the game. Certainly Black can give up his extra pawn, but then it will be quite easy for White to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

The game Leitao – Dyce, Szeged 1994, continued:

18...♕xd1† 19.♗xd1 ♖e8 20.c5 ♖e1† 21.♖f1 ♖xf1† 22.♔xf1

This endgame is very difficult for Black.

12.♕xd2 d6

It makes no sense to play 12...a4?! as White easily achieves c4-c5, obtaining a clear edge. 13.c5 (or 13.♕c3 d6 14.c5!) And now Black cannot play 13...♕xc5?! 14.♖ac1, as he is losing the c7-pawn.

13.b4 ♖e8

The game Malaniuk – Marjanovic, Yugoslavia 1993, instead continued: 13...f6 14.bxa5! ♔h8 (14...♘c6? runs into 15.a6! ♖xa6 16.c5 with a winning position) 15.♖fb1 White was pressing on the queenside.

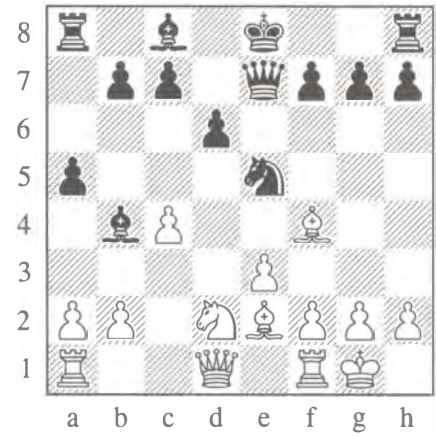
14.♖fc1

As always, White is better, as Black can do nothing against the coming c4-c5, Vitiugov – Lanin, St Petersburg 2006.

B25) 9...a5! 10.0–0

Or 10.a3 ♗xd2† 11.♕xd2 d6 (only not 11...a4? 12.c5 with an advantage) 12.0–0 (12.b3 looks a bit slow, but might be an interesting option) 12...a4 transposes to the 11.a3 line below, which we wish to avoid.

10...d6



11.♘b1!

This seems to be the only move that promises White better chances. Strangely enough, the text has occurred only once in tournament practice. White has several alternatives, but none of them gives White anything special.

11.a3 ♗xd2

Not 11...♗c5?! 12.♘e4! when White has the initiative, Epishin – Thielemann, Kiel 2004.

12.♕xd2 a4!

This is the point; Black fixes White's pawn chain, restricting his options on the queenside. Now the 13.c5 advance would not be so clear, and instead 13.♕d5 would be met by 13...♘d7! followed by ...♘c5.

13...dxc5 14.♕d5

Or 14.♖ac1 0–0 15.♕d5 ♘g6 16.♗g5 (or 16.♗g3 ♖a5) 16...♕e6 17.♖xc5 ♕xd5 18.♖xd5 f6 with equality.

14...♘g6 15.♗g3

15.♗b5† ♔f8 is not dangerous for Black.
15...0–0 16.♖ac1 ♖a5

White's compensation was only enough for a draw in Van Wely – Bosman, Netherlands 1989.

I also looked at the new 11.♘e4, with the idea of playing a2-a3 next, but Black is in time to create counterplay: 11...♘g6 12.♗f3 f5! (but not 12...♘xf4?! 13.exf4 0–0 14.a3 ♗c5 15.♖e1 ♗b6 16.♘c3 when White has pressure) 13.♘c3 (after 13.♗g5 ♕f7 14.♘c3 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 0–0 White may soon be worse due to his weaknesses on the queenside) 13...♗xc3 14.bxc3 0–0 And Black is fine.

White's most popular move is:
11.♘b3

Then Black has an interesting option:
11...a4 12.a3 ♗c3!?

Instead 12...♗a5 13.♘d4 (or 13.♘xa5 ♖xa5 14.e4 0–0 15.♗d2 ♖a8 16.♗c3 ♘c6 is pretty solid for Black) 13...♗b6 14.♘b5! looks quite interesting for White.

13.bxc3

White is not better after 13.♕c2 ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 axb3 15.c5 ♗e6, M. Rodshtein – Avila Jimenez, Andorra 2007.

13...axb3 14.♕xb3 0–0 15.♗xe5

Otherwise Black can transfer his knight to c5 with fine compensation, for example 15.♖fd1 ♘d7.

15...♕xe5 16.♖fd1 b6 17.♗f3 ♖a7 18.♖d5 ♕f6

I do not believe White can break through.

11...0–0

Quite possible is 11...a4, but this pawn might become a target in the long term. 12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘c3 ♗d7 14.♘d5 ♕d8 15.♕c2 0–0 16.♖ad1 (there is no advantage after 16.♗xe5 dxe5 17.♖ad1 f5 [17...♖a6!?] 18.♖d2 ♖a6 19.♖fd1 ♖d6 20.♕c3 ♖e8) 16...♖e8 17.h3



I believe White is slightly better in this position, as Black is facing a typical dilemma in this structure – What to do about the d5-knight, which obviously restricts his pieces? If ...c7-c6, then the d6-pawn is weakened, but the manoeuvre ...♗d7-c6xd5 would not bring relief either, as White would recapture with the rook and continue his pressure along the d-file. Meanwhile White can gradually improve his position, preparing the advance of the e- and f-pawns.

12.a3 ♗c5 13.♘c3 ♗e6

The most natural move. The alternative would be:
13...c6 14.♕c2 ♘g6

After 14...f6 15.♖fd1 ♗e6 16.♘a4 ♗a7 17.♖d2, although Black's position is pretty stable, White's chances are preferable, in view of his pressure against the d6-pawn. Certainly Black can try 17...d5, but after 18.cxd5 ♗xd5 19.♖ad1 ♕f7 20.♘c5 ♗xc5 21.♕xc5 the two bishops give White the advantage.

15.♗g3 f5

This is a generally desirable plan to activate the dark-squared bishop with the ...f5-f4 advance.

16.♘a4 f4

If 16...♗a7 then 17.♕d2! attacks both the a5- and d6-pawns.

17.exf4 ♘xf4 18.♗xf4 ♖xf4 19.♘xc5 dxc5 20.♗d3 g6



21.♖ae1

White has a pleasant edge, as he has a clear plan of converting his extra pawn on the kingside.

14.b3

Premature would be 14.♘d5 ♗xd5 15.♕xd5 (or 15.cxd5 f5! when Black is not worse) 15...c6 16.♕d2 a4! and Black had reasonable play in Shipov – Galanov, Russia 1992.

14...♘g6 15.♗g3 f5

This position was reached in Van den Bersselaar – Pelter, Netherlands 1996.

16.♕d2

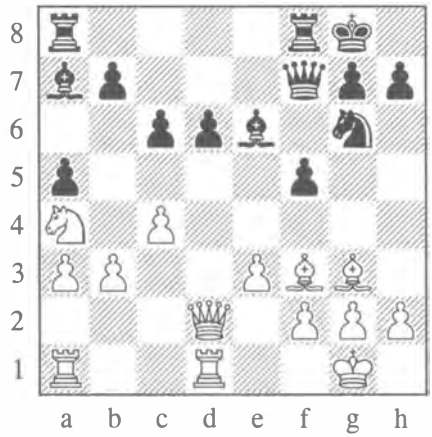
This is a critical position for the 9...a5 line. Certainly the previous play was not all forced, but it seems to me this type of position should appear anyway. In general White's chances look preferable, as he has clear ideas of how to improve his position. He will play ♘a4 (maybe even after the preparatory ♖fd1) and then, depending on Black's reply, continue with b3-b4, or play ♗f3 keeping up the pressure on the queenside. In the game mentioned above, White continued with 16.♗f3, but I do not like this as Black can win a tempo by attacking the bishop with ...♘e5.

It is also important to realize that Black has no time to prepare the ...f5-f4 advance:

16...♕f7 17.♘a4 ♗a7

Instead 17...f4?! does not work: 18.exf4 ♘xf4 19.♗f3 c6 20.♖fe1! and Black's position collapses.

18.♗f3 c6 19.♖fd1



White has definite pressure against the d6-pawn.

C) 4...♗c5



This is Black's most popular continuation.

5.e3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 0–0

The following move order is dubious, according to some theorists, since it allows White an additional option:

6...♘gxe5 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 8.f4

8.♗e2 leads to the same position as in the main line, which is well worth considering. To be honest, I am not that excited about this f4-opportunity and I believe Black's position is quite reasonable in what follows.

8...♘g6

Black is indeed worse in the event of: 8...♘c6 9.♗d3 d6 10.0–0 0–0 11.a3 a5 (Other options are no better: 11...f5 12.b4 ♗b6 13.♘d5 ♗e6 14.♖f3 and White easily develops an initiative with ♗b2 and ♖g3. 11...♖e8 12.♕c2 h6 13.♖f3 and White has good attacking prospects.) 12.♗d2 Followed by ♕f3 and ♖ae1.

9.♗d3 0–0 10.0–0 d6!N

The negative view of 6...♘gxe5 is based on only one game! Clearly inferior is 10...f5 11.♕c2 d6 12.♘a4! ♘e7 13.♗d2 ♘c6 14.a3 a5 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♗c3 and White launched a decisive attack with the help of his strong dark-squared bishop in Komljenovic – L.V. Martin, Spain 1997.

11.♗d2 ♗d7

Not 11...f5?! 12.♔h1 ♗e6 13.♖f3, followed by ♖h3 and ♕h5, with the initiative.

12.♔h1

Or 12.♕c2 f5 with unclear play.

12...♖e8 13.e4 c6

Black has counterplay.

7.♗e2

7.♕d5 is well met by 7...♕e7.

7...♘gxe5 8.♘xe5

Instead 8.0–0 unnecessarily gives Black an extra option: 8...♘xf3† 9.♗xf3 ♗d6!? With the idea of placing the bishop on e5. The game I. Farago – Felegyhazi, Balatonlelle 2006, continued 10.b3 ♗e5 11.♗b2 d6 12.♕d2 ♗e6 13.♖ad1 with a complex game where White's chances are slightly preferable.

8...♘xe5 9.0–0



This is the initial position of our variation. In my opinion the whole line promises White slightly better chances, due to his control of the centre.

Black has a choice between **C1) 9...d6**, **C2) 9...a5** and **C3) 9...♖e8**.

C1) 9...d6 10.b3

10.♘a4 ♗b6 is not clear.

10...♕h4

A typical active move for this line, but White has nothing to worry about from Black's so-called threats.

Black has tried many moves here, so I have selected the ones that I believe are the most important:

a) 10...♗f5 11.♗b2 a6 12.♕d2 (The text move is more convincing than the alternatives: 12.♘a4 ♖e8 13.♘xc5 dxc5 is not much for White. 12.a3 is possible, but it is too slow in my opinion.) 12...♖e8 13.♖ad1 ♗a7 14.♘d5 White has reached his goal, while Black's play has failed to even get started.

b) 10...f5 This lunge does not achieve its aim and only creates weaknesses in Black's camp: 11.♘a4 ♗b6 12.♗b2 (12.♕d5† may be even

stronger: 12...♘f7 [12...♔h8?! 13.c5! with a clear advantage] 13.♘xb6 axb6 14.♗b2 With a stable advantage, as Black will experience serious problems along the a1-h8 diagonal.) 12...♕e7 13.♕d2 ♔h8 14.b4 ♗d7 15.♘xb6 axb6 16.c5! White has fine play. 16...bxc5 17.bxc5 ♗c6 18.cxd6 cxd6 This is Woller – Kemna, Germany 1985, and here 19.f3 would have secured White's advantage.

11.♗b2

It is too early for: 11.♘d5 c6 12.b4 cxd5! (the text is more accurate than 12...♗b6 13.g3 ♕d8 14.♘xb6 axb6 15.f4 ♘g6 16.♗b2±) 13.bxc5 ♘xc4 (Black fails to equalize after 13...dxc4 14.cxd6 ♗f5 15.♕d5 ♕e4 16.♖d1±) 14.cxd6 ♗e6=

After 11.♗b2 I examined two possibilities for Black; in both of them White keeps a small but stable plus.

11...♘g4

The other line runs: 11...♗d7 12.♘d5 c6 (12...♘g4? does not work in view of 13.h3 and Black loses material) 13.g3 ♕h3 14.♘f4 This is not such a bad square for White's knight, as from here it restricts Black's activity on the kingside. 14...♕f5 15.♕d2 a5 16.a3 White is threatening the unpleasant 17.b4. As always, after ...c7-c6 White has a clear target – the d6-pawn.



12.h3!N

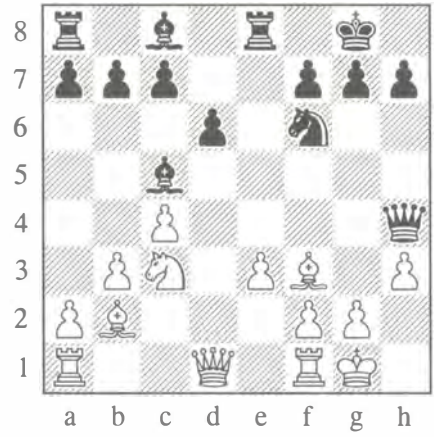
So far White has tried only 12.♗xg4. For example: 12...♗xg4 13.♕d2 ♖ae8 with mutual chances, A. Williams – Barbero, Buenos Aires (ol) 1978.

12...♘f6

Probably White was afraid of 12...♘xf2? but it does not work: 13.♖xf2 ♗xe3 14.♕e1 ♗xh3 Otherwise there is no point to Black's previous play. 15.♘d5 (15.♗f3!?) 15...♗c5 16.b4 ♗xf2† 17.♕xf2 ♕xf2† 18.♔xf2 ♗e6 19.♘xc7 ♖ac8 20.♘xe6 fxe6† 21.♔e3 With a clear advantage, as White's two bishops are obviously stronger than Black's rook and pawn.

13.♗f3 ♖e8

13...♕g5 is powerfully met by 14.♘b5! ♗b6 15.a4 a5 16.♗d4 with positional pressure.



14.♘b5

White has to watch out for tricks, such as: 14.♕d2 ♗xh3! 15.gxh3 ♖xe3!! 16.fxe3 (not 16.♗g2?! ♖xh3, which is dangerous for White) 16...♗xe3† 17.♕xe3 ♕g3† 18.♔h1 ♕xh3† With a perpetual check. White does not have ♗g2, as his queen would be hanging.

14...♖e7

After 14...♗b6 15.♗d4! Black cannot defend the c7-pawn with 15...♖e7 because of 16.c5!

♗xc5 17.♗xc5 dxc5 18.♕d8† ♖e8 19.♕xc7 with a winning position.

15.♗d4

White is slightly better, due to his space advantage and very strong light-squared bishop.

C2) 9...a5 10.b3 d6

After 10...♖a6 White has a very strong option:



11.f4! ♘g6 12.♔h1 ♖e8 13.e4 (It is already obvious that 10...♖a6 has failed.) 13...b6 (if 13...♗b4 then 14.♘d5 ♖xe4 15.f5! ♘e7 16.♕d3 wins an exchange) And now very strong is 14.f5 (rather than 14.♗d3 as in Quinteros – Szmetan, Rio Hondo 1987) 14...♘e5 15.f6 creating serious threats against the black king.

11.♗b2 ♖e8 12.♕c2

The best square for White's queen is c2. Less clear is 12.♘a4 b6 13.♘xc5 bxc5 14.f4 ♘d7 15.♗f3 ♖b8∞ as in Osnos – Yermolinsky, Leningrad 1977, because this kind of pawn structure offers Black reasonable counterplay. Also not so convincing is 12.♕d2 ♗f5.

12...♗d7

Instead 12...♕h4 is useless after 13.♘d5 ♖e6 14.g3 ♕d8 15.♖fd1±.

13.♖ad1



Finally all the white pieces are mobilized, and next White will jump his knight into d5. In general, we can see that White's play is quite easy, while Black is failing to create counterplay.

C3) 9...♖e8

This is definitely the main continuation. Now White has a wild array of possibilities: 10.f4, 10.a3, 10.♘e4 and even the mysterious 10.♔h1 has been tried, but I strongly recommend a natural move:

10.b3

I think this is the most logical move. White's play is quite simple – he logically mobilizes his pieces with ♗b2, ♕c2, ♖ad1, fighting for the central squares. On every move Black must be ready for the white knight to jump to d5, e4 or even a4.

10...a5

Black's most popular reply; the main idea is to play ...♖a6 and transfer the rook to the kingside (g6 or h6) creating threats against White's king. Sometimes the rook might also be useful on e6. In general I have noticed that Budapest aficionados do not like long positional struggles; usually they try to generate some kind of activity as soon as possible.

Another common line starts:
10...d6 11.♗b2



This is an important moment; Black has tried several options here:

Black can try the same idea as the main line, except with the "wrong" rook:
a) 11...♖e6 12.g3!?

This interesting move has been played by strong players such as Gheorghiu and Vyzmanavin. It may look like it unnecessarily weakens the light squares near his king, but White takes control of the h4-square, preventing Black's queen jump, so Black has no time to create a real attack.

Instead 12.♘e4 b6 13.♘xc5 bxc5 14.f4 ♘d7 is quite double-edged, but 12.♘d5 c6 13.♘f4 is worth considering. For all that, I suggest 12.g3 is the way to go.

12...a5

12...♖h6 13.♘e4 (13.♘a4 ♕d7) 13...♕d7 14.h4 gives the same evaluation as after 12...♕d7, which we might as well look at now as well.

12...♕d7 13.♘a4! (the text move is stronger than 13.♕d5 ♖h6 14.♖fd1, with the idea of meeting 14...♕h3 with 15.♕g2, as in Gheorghiu – Terreaux, Mendrisio 1985) 13...♖h6 14.h4 Taking the sting out of ...♕h3; now Black's attack goes nowhere, since his pieces are hanging in the centre. For example, Sandkaulen – R. Markus, corr. 1990, continued 14...♗b6 and now 15.c5N ♗b6 16.♖c1 would have been much better for White.

13.♕c2

Not 13.♔h1?! b6 14.e4 ♖g6 and Black's attack was on the way in Vyzmanavin – Kotronias, Moscow 1987.

13...♖h6

Another idea for Black is 13...♗d7, transferring his bishop to c6. 14.♖ad1 ♗c6 (once again 14...♖h6?! does not work in view of 15.♘e4 and two of Black's minor pieces are hanging in the centre) 15.♘d5 Now 15...♖h6 is still a failure: 16.♗xe5 dxe5 17.♘b6! And Black loses material.

14.♖fd1

Following the usual central strategy.

14...♗g4

14...♕d7 15.♕e4! One of the key defensive resources (instead 15.h4 allows Black to gain counter chances after 15...♕h3 16.♘d5 ♘g4 17.♗xg4 ♕xg4). 15...♕h3 16.♕g2 ♕xg2† 17.♔xg2 ♗h3† 18.♔g1 And it is not so clear what Black's rook is doing on h6.

15.♗xg4 ♘xg4



16.♕f5! ♘xh2

After 16...♕c8 17.♕xc8† ♖xc8 18.♘d5 ♔f8 19.h4 White is clearly better, as Black's rook is misplaced on h6.

17.♔g2

White is threatening 18.♖h1, so the next series of moves is more or less forced:

17...♖f6 18.♕e4 ♖e6 19.♕xb7 ♘g4 20.♘d5 ♖a7 21.♕c6

White is better, because of Black's weak pawns on the queenside.

b) 11...♗d7 12.♕c2

Also interesting is 12.♘d5!? c6 (or 12...♗c6 13.b4 ♗xd5 14.cxd5 ♗b6 15.a4 a5 16.bxa5 ♗xa5 17.♕b3 and White has an initiative on the queenside) 13.♘f4.

12...♗c6 13.♖ad1

White gradually improves his position.

13...♘g6?! 14.♘d5 ♘h4



15.g3!

Refuting Black's idea.

Much worse is 15.♗d3?! ♕g5 16.♗xh7†? (better is 16.g3) 16...♔h8 17.♗e4 ♖xe4! 18.♕xe4 ♖e8 and White was lost in Roeschlau – Fohler, Mengen 1990.

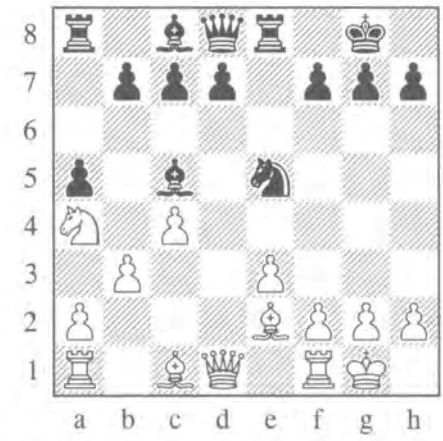
15...♕g5 16.b4 ♗b6 17.a4

With a large advantage.

11.♘a4!

This is a very important moment. At this point we actually deviate from the main theory line and make a very concrete move – now Black has no time for ...♖a6. Instead there is a lot of theory after 11.♗b2 ♖a6 12.♘e4 (or 12.♘a4).

The funny thing is that after I had completed my initial analysis of this line I played in the 2009 Politiken Cup and managed to go astray on the 11th move by playing 11.♗b2 instead of 11.♘a4!. During the game I was really surprised to discover that Black had interesting resources, and it was only later, when I checked my preparation, that I realized what had gone wrong! The game Avrukh – Skytte, Helsingor 2009, continued 11...♖a6 12.♘e4 ♗a7 13.c5 ♖h6 14.g3. I eventually won a nice positional game, but this was hardly connected with the opening, since here Black missed 14...b6! followed by ...♗b7, which would have given him really good play.



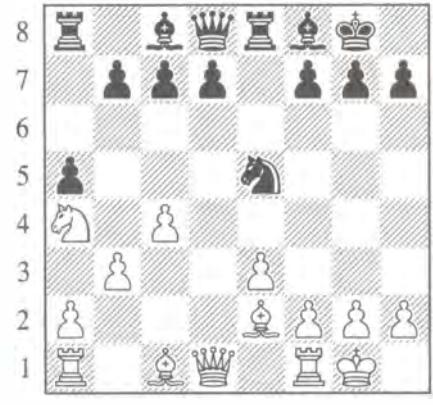
11...♗f8

The most logical reply. Other moves are:

Clearly dubious is 11...♕e7?! 12.♘xc5 ♕xc5 13.♕d5!? and Black has no compensation for White's bishop pair, Gruenenwald – Gorla, Switzerland 1993. 13.♗b2!? also looks good.

11...♗a7 12.c5! As always, this move works perfectly for White. 12...d5 13.cxd6 c6 (probably best is 13...cxd6, though White has a clear positional advantage after 14.♗b2) 14.♗b2 b5 (Black could regain the pawn with 14...♖e6, but after 15.♕c2 ♕xd6 16.♖fd1 ♕e7 17.♖ac1 White is much better, as Black's pieces lack coordination) 15.♘c3 Black did not get any compensation for the pawn in Skembris – Mukic, Estensi 2001.

11...d6N 12.♘xc5 dxc5 And now White has a pleasant choice: 13.♕xd8 (or 13.♕c2 ♗d7 14.♗b2 ♗c6 15.♕f5 and, though Black is pretty solid, the bishop pair should give White the advantage in the long term) 13...♖xd8 14.♗b2 with a good endgame. For example, 14...♘d3 15.♖fd1 ♗f5 16.♗c3.



12.f4!

The point of White's previous move; the black knight is ejected from the centre White gains a lot of space for his pieces, especially for the bishops. One is coming to b2, while the other has a nice square on f3.

White's other options do not look so clear, but it may be useful to see why they do not work:

12.c5 d5 13.♗b2 (13.cxd6 ♗xd6 14.♗b2 ♗f5 is okay for Black) 13...♗d7 This is playable for Black. 14.♘c3 (or 14.♕xd5 ♗xa4 15.♖fd1 ♕xd5 16.♖xd5 ♘g6 17.bxa4 ♘f4 and Black seems to hold) In Tukmakov – Forintos, Metz 1991, Black played 15...c6, but even the primitive 14...♗xc5 15.♕xd5 ♕e7 was possible, with good play for Black.

12.e4 is a possible plan, but I prefer to avoid this, since Black will always have counterplay against the e-pawn. For example, 12...♘c6 13.♗d3 d6 14.♗b2 ♗e7, followed by ...♗f6 with double-edged play.

12...♘g6

The other knight retreat is also possible: 12...♘c6 Now 13.♗f3 leads to two interesting possibilities – one rather optimistic and unnatural, the other to a game where White has a clear improvement:



Moskalenko recommended:

13...♖a6

Here I recommend a prophylactic move:

14.a3!?

Preventing Black's idea of ...♘b4 followed by ...♖d6, activating the rook.

Certainly White could also continue: 14.e4 ♘b4 15.♕e2 d5 (or 15...♖ae6 16.♗e3 is clearly better for White) 16.cxd5 ♘xd5 17.e5 (17.♖d1? would be a serious mistake, as Black has 17...♕f6 18.e5 ♘xf4! 19.♕e3 ♘h3†! 20.gxh3 ♖xe5 winning) 17...c6 18.♖d1 With the better prospects for White.

14...d6

Maybe not what Black wants to play, but what else can he do?

15.♕d3 ♗e7 16.♗b2 ♗f6 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♘c3

White is better due to his extra space, while the ...♖a6 move appears to be useless.

13...d6 14.♕d2

Simple play, wanting to play ♗b2.

After 14.♗b2 ♖xe3 15.♕d2 ♖e8 16.♖ae1 White has definite compensation, but it is rather complicated.

14...♗f5

This was tried in Agdestein – Haik, Marseille 1987, rather than 14...♗e7 15.♗b2 ♗f6 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♘c3 when White controls all the important squares in the centre.

Now White should have continued with his plan:

15.♗b2!N

If Black tries the same ...♕b8-a7 manoeuvre that was played in the Agdestein – Haik game, then White is ready for him.

15...♕b8

Instead 15...♗e4?! makes no sense, as it only helps White to seize the initiative: 16.♘c3 ♗xf3 17.♖xf3 and next we have ♖g3 and ♘d5 coming.

Now White can simply play:

16.♖ae1 ♕a7 17.♔h1±

With an obvious advantage for White; Black is very passive and White's plan includes ♘c3-d5 and e3-e4.



13.♕d3!N

In my opinion this move is a serious improvement; White manages to reach his optimal set-up.

The main move according to theory is 13.♕d2 but I find it slightly inaccurate, since it allows Black to obtain some counterplay with 13...♘h4!N. The main idea is to play ...♘f5 at an appropriate moment. Previously against 13.♕d2 Black has not managed to solve his opening problems:

13...b6 14.♗b2 ♗b7 15.♗f3 ♕b8 16.♖ad1 ♘h4 17.♗d5!?

An interesting decision, but also reasonable is 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7 18.♕c2 (with the idea of playing 19.♖d5) and if 18...♖xe3 19.♕f2 ♗e7 (if 19...♘f5 then 20.♖d5 wins material) 20.♖xd7 and Black is helpless against ♖e7 followed by ♕h4.

17...♘f5 18.♗xf7†!

A nice tactical blow that allows White to develop a strong initiative.

18...♔xf7 19.♕xd7† ♔g6 20.g4

This is Vallejo Pons – Romero Holmes, Spain 2002.

13...♕e7 14.♘c3 ♕c5 was Blazek – Ptacnik, Czech Republic 2004, and now 15.♘d5 is clearly better for White.

13...c6 14.♗b2 d5 15.cxd5 ♗f5 (after 15...b5 16.♘c3 ♗c5 17.♘d1 ♕xd5 18.♕c3 ♗f8 19.♗f3 White wins the c6-pawn) 16.♗d4 White was better in Cu. Hansen – Miezis, Copenhagen 2004.

So now we can understand the difference with:

13...♘h4!N 14.♗b2

14.♗d3 b6 is given by Moskalenko, but instead with 14...b5! followed by ...♗b7, Black takes over the initiative and gains a clear edge.

14...♕e7

14...♘f5 runs into 15.e4! (15.♖f3!?) 15...♖xe4 16.♗d3 and Black loses the exchange.

15.♗d4 ♘f5 16.♗f3 ♖a6!

And Black definitely has play. Note that

16...♘xd4 17.exd4 ♕e3† 18.♕xe3 ♖xe3 19.♖ae1 might be dangerous for Black, as he would face serious problems developing his light-squared bishop.

13...d6 14.♘c3 c6 15.e4



White has a very pleasant edge, thanks to his space advantage.

Conclusion:

The Budapest Gambit is almost a respectable opening; I doubt there is a refutation. Even in the lines where White manages to keep an extra pawn, Black always has a lot of play for it. I recommend 4.♘f3, which may be an unpleasant choice for Budapest lovers, as White is aiming for positional play and not heading into complications by trying to keep the extra pawn.

At move 4 there is an important crossroads – 4...♘c6 or 4...♗c5 (4...♗b4† is hardly playable for Black, though there are some important moments to look out for).

After 4...♘c6 White has to be familiar with the rarely-played 6...f6, which does not have a clear refutation according to theory. I believe White has a clear edge in this line and the reader should remember White's key idea – the c4-c5 temporary pawn sacrifice gives plenty of scope for seizing the initiative. In the main line White often gains an advantage by forcing Black to give up his dark-squared bishop. The most important line appears after 9...a5, which seems Black's best bet, yet after the smooth 11.♘b1 White gets exactly the kind of pleasant space-advantage position we are looking for.

4...♗c5 has been the most popular reply in recent years. In the main line I recommend the positional 10.b3, which promises White easy play with every chance of an advantage. The key moment is 11.♘a4!, which avoids Black's typical transfer of his queen's rook to the kingside, and allows White to reach his optimal set-up.

As things stand, White enjoys a plus in both lines, but there may still be room for improvements.





Benoni Systems

Catalan Benoni

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5

4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 b5

A) 6.e4!? ♘xe4 7.♕e2 ♕e7 8.♗g2 93
A1) 8...♘d6 94
A2) 8...f5! 94
B) 6.♘f3!? 95
B1) 6...♗b7 96
B2) 6...d6 7.e4 97
B21) 7...a6 98
B22) 7...b4N 100

B) first note



14.♗xb2!N

B21) after 8...b4?!



9.♘bd2!N

B21) note to 9.♘bd2!N



13. 0–0!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 b5

This has always been a very serious weapon against the Catalan opening. As this line is considered by some as a real headache for White, many Catalan players have tried to avoid it with the help of 4.♘f3, but then after 4...cxd4 5.♘xd4 the game transposes to the English opening where Black has many options. Basically there is a healthy idea behind this system. Black's intention is to get a Benoni-type position with his pawn already on b5 (normally in the Benoni it takes Black a lot of time to achieve this advance). Black will gain plenty of space on the queenside, which could promise him good play. But towards the end of 2007 the situation changed dramatically, as top players came up with two strong ideas for White.



In this position I have decided to recommend 6.♘f3, which is often followed by e2-e4 and sharp play. However, it would be unnatural to avoid mentioning another very sharp option that exists in this position. So, for this reason we shall look at it first.

A) 6.e4!?

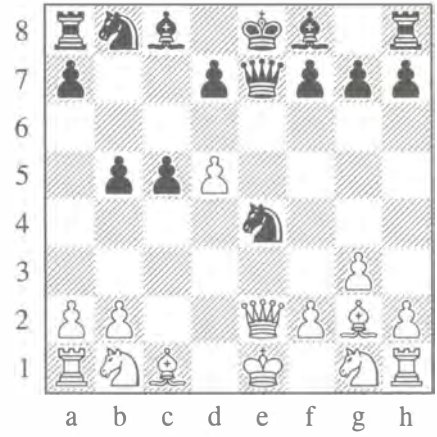
This was first played in an odd game in the 1960s, and then later investigated by Sosonko in the late 70s, though he chucked it after a few attempts. The true revolution was 30 years later when Vladimir Kramnik used it in 2007 to secure first place in the Tal Memorial in Moscow.

Here we shall just quickly go through the ideas that are already known, as understanding these will be very useful when we go on to look at our move, 6.♘f3. In addition, there may be some who wish to follow Kramnik's rather than my proposal, however unlikely this might sound.

6...♘xe4

The only acceptable move seems to be to accept the invitation. If Black does not do so, White will have been able to inconvenience him to too great an extent with the pawn push. 6...♗b7?! 7.♗g2 d6 8.a4 b4 9.♘d2± Manor – Greenfeld, Rishon LeZion 1996, and 6...♕e7 7.♗g2 d6 8.♘e2 g6 9.0–0 ♗g7 10.e5! ♕xe5 11.♘ec3 0–0 12.♘xb5± De Carbonnel – Wiersma, corr. 1978, are good examples of this.

7.♕e2 ♕e7 8.♗g2



Here it makes sense to look at two lines, **A1) 8...♘d6**, as played against Kramnik, and the more combative **A2) 8...f5**.

A1) 8...♘d6

This is rather passive; I am not surprised that White seems to gain an edge in this line.

9.♗e3 b4

Later an odd placement of the knight, combined with the same advance of the b-pawn, was tried:

9...♘a6 10.♘c3 b4

10...♖b8 has been tried recently, but 11.0–0–0!? appears to secure White an advantage. Remember, we are playing a gambit here! And this means we are aiming for quick development. For example: 11...b4 12.♘a4 ♘f5 13.d6 ♘xd6 14.♗f4±

11.♘a4 g6

11...c4 is very similar to lines investigated by Sosonko in *New in Chess* Yearbook 86. After 12.♘h3 g6 13.0–0 ♗g7 (13...♗h6? 14.♗xh6! ♕xe2 15.♖fe1 ♕xe1† 16.♖xe1† ♔d8 17.♗g5† ♔c7 18.♗f4+– followed by ♘g5, ♖c1 and other unpleasant moves) 14.♖fe1 0–0 I am not sure what the evaluation of this middlegame should be. The computer suggests: 15.♕f1!? ♕d8 16.♗f4 ♘f5 17.d6 ♖b8 18.g4 ♕a5 19.gxf5 ♕xa4 20.♕xc4∞

12.♘xc5

12.0–0–0!± is more aggressive.

12...♘xc5 13.♗xc5 a5

The accurate equalizer was 13...♗a6!.

14.♗d4±

White had an edge in Moiseenko – Carlsson, Plovdiv 2008.

10.♗xc5 ♕xe2† 11.♘xe2 ♘a6 12.♗xd6!

An improvement over 12.♗d4 ♘f5 13.0–0?! ♗c5!∞ as in Sosonko – Olafsson, Wijk aan Zee 1977.

12...♗xd6 13.♘d2 ♖b8 14.♘c4 ♗e7 15.d6 ♗f6 16.♘f4 ♘c5 17.0–0± ♗a6 18.♘d5 0–0 19.♘xf6† gxf6 20.♗d5 ♘a4 21.♖fc1 ♖fe8 22.♘e3 ♖b6 23.♖c7 ♖xd6 24.♖d1 ♔h8 25.♘f5 ♖b6 26.♗xf7 ♘xb2 27.♖dxd7 ♖e1† 28.♔g2 ♗f1† 29.♔f3 ♗e2† 30.♔f4 ♖b8 31.♗c4

1–0

This was the inspirational game Kramnik – Alekseev, Moscow 2007.

The critical option is:

A2) 8...f5!



It is of course impossible for me to guess what Kramnik had in mind here, but some commentators have given some suggestions that could be considered.

9.d6!

This seems to be the path forward. Other moves offer little.

9...♕e6

9...♕xd6 would now fail to 10.f3 ♘c6 11.fxe4 ♘d4 12.e5!±.

10.♘c3 ♗xd6 11.g4!?

Sosonko suggests that Kramnik could have intended: 11.♘xb5 ♗a6 12.♗xe4 ♗xb5 13.♗xf5 ♕xe2† (Safer was 13...♗xe2 14.♗xe6 ♗b5 15.♗d5 ♗c6 16.♗xc6 ♘xc6=, but the position in the game is maybe not as clear

as Sosonko suggests!?) 14.♘xe2 0–0 15.♗e4 ♗c6 16.♗xc6 ♘xc6 17.♗e3 ♘e5 18.0–0–0 ♘c4 19.♗f4 ♗xf4† 20.♘xf4 g5 21.♘h3 ♖ad8 22.♖d5± Van Wessel – Timman, Netherlands (rapid) 2008.

11...g6 12.gxf5

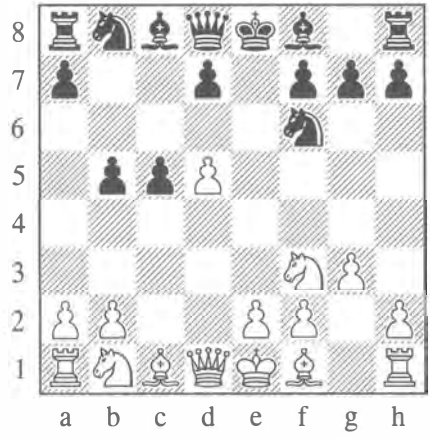
Or 12.♘h3 ♕c4 13.♕xc4 bxc4 14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♘c6 16.♗g5 ♗e5 17.0–0–0⩲.

12...gxf5 13.♘h3⩱

Timman does not fancy Black's position here. I am sure we have not heard the last of this line, though my impression is that 6.♘f3!? is at least as attractive as 6.e4.

My Recommendation

B) 6.♘f3!?



Usually White has reacted with 6.♗g2, but Gelfand came up with a different concept. He believes that the light-squared bishop might work out well on the f1-a6 diagonal, targeting the b5-pawn. This is the line we shall concentrate on.

Now Black has two main possibilities, **B1) 6...♗b7** and **B2) 6...d6**. The latter is probably the critical variation, though it is hard to determine, as very few games have been played in this position at the time of writing, but who knows, maybe this book will change that?

Before studying the two main lines, we should note the problem with the following minor line:

6...g6?! 7.e4 ♘xe4

Now White should continued with:

8.♗d3!

The text move is more accurate than 8.♗xb5 ♗g7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♖e1 ♘f6 11.♘c3 d6∞ with double-edged play, Ponfilenok – Shaposhnikov, Kazan 2008.

8...f5

Much worse is: 8...♘f6? 9.0–0 ♗g7 (or 9...♗e7 10.♗xb5, threatening 11.d6, 10...♕b6 11.♖e1! 0–0 12.♖xe7 ♕xb5 13.♘c3 ♕b6 14.♗h6 and Black's position is hopeless) 10.♖e1† ♔f8 11.♗xb5 With Black's king still uncastled, White's advantage is indisputable.

9.0–0 ♗g7 10.♘bd2 0–0

10...♘xd2 11.♗xd2 0–0 12.♗xb5 This would be a normal Benoni position, if Black's pawn was still standing on f7. 12...♕b6 (12...♗a6 13.♗xa6 ♘xa6 14.d6 gives a clear positional advantage for White) 13.a4 ♗a6 14.♕b3 d6 15.♕e3! Black's weaknesses start to tell.

11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.♗xe4 d6 13.♘g5!

A typical Benoni idea; White's knight is coming to e6.

13...♗xb2



This position was reached in Gleizerov – Grover, Dubai 2008, and here White should have continued:

14.♗xb2!N

Unclear is 14.♖b1 ♗xc1 15.♘e6 ♕e7 16.♕xc1 ♘c6!.

14...♕xg5 15.f4 ♕h6

15...♕e7 loses to 16.♕c2! with the two powerful ideas of ♕c3 and ♗xg6.

16.♕e2

White has powerful compensation for the pawn.

B1) 6...♗b7



7.e4

White's second option is:

7.♗g5!? ♕a5†

If 7...h6 8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 9.e4 ♕xb2 10.♘bd2 a6 11.a4 b4 12.♗c4 and White's position looks very attractive.

And now I believe White should continue:

8.♘bd2

Worse is 8.♗d2?! as played in Waqar – Deshmukh, India 1999. 8...b4 9.e4 And now Black could have taken White's central pawn with 9...♘xe4!, as 10.♗f4 is hit by the computer-like refutation: 10...♗d6! 11.♕e2 ♗xd5 12.♗xd6 ♔d8!! And Black is threatening both ...♖e8 and ...b3†.

8...♘xd5

Obviously White has great compensation after 8...♗xd5?! 9.♗xf6 (or 9.♗g2 ♗e7 10.0–0 followed by e2-e4) 9...gxf6 10.♗g2.

9.e4



White's lead in development, plus Black's misplaced queen on a5, will allow White a lot of play for the pawn.

7...♘xe4 8.♗g2!?

This interesting pawn sacrifice is my main recommendation, so we will examine it deeply. Basically White's play is very simple: his d5-pawn gives him good positional compensation, restricting Black's minor pieces on the queenside, while the open e-file allows White to generate active play and good attacking chances.

Mihail Marin's suggestion of 8.♗xb5 also looks very interesting. 8...♕a5†



9.♘fd2! This is the point. (Instead 9.♘bd2 ♘xg3! is fine for Black.) Now Black's best line is: 9...♗xd5 10.0–0 ♕xb5 11.♘xe4 ♕c6 12.♘bc3 ♗e6 And this is the critical position, as rightly pointed out by Marin. There is no doubt that White has a lot of play for the pawn, nevertheless Black's position is pretty solid.

8...♗e7

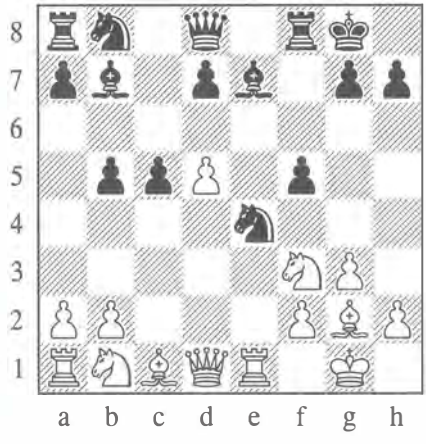
8...♗d6 does not look good. 9.0–0 0–0 10.♘h4! ♖e8 (after 10...♘f6 11.♘f5 ♕b6 12.a4! White seizes the initiative) 11.♖e1 ♘f6 12.♖xe8† ♘xe8 13.♘c3 White has obvious compensation, as Black's minor pieces are out of play on the queenside. The following line shows one possible continuation: 13...b4 14.♘e4 g6 15.♗g5 ♕c7 16.♘xd6 ♕xd6 17.♕e2 ♘a6 18.♗e7 ♕c7 19.♖e1 White's initiative continues.

9.0–0 0–0

9...d6 10.♖e1 f5 11.♘c3 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 0–0 would just transpose to 9...0–0.

10.♖e1 f5

Another possible line runs: 10...♘d6 11.♗f4 ♘a6 12.♘c3 b4 13.♘a4 (unclear is 13.♗xd6 ♗xd6 14.♘e4 ♕c7) 13...♖e8 14.b3 ♗f8 15.♕d3⩲ There is nothing concrete, but White's positional compensation cannot be denied.



11.♘c3!

Obviously White has to get rid of Black's centralized knight in order to gain space for his pieces.

11...♘xc3

This is Black's best option. Other moves are hardly advisable:

11...♘a6 12.♘xb5 ♕b6 13.♘c3 is better for White.

11...d6 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♘d2! ♘d7 14.♘xe4 c4 15.♗f4 ♘b6 16.♕g4 and White develops a dangerous initiative.

12.bxc3 d6

This is much better than: 12...♗f6?! 13.♖b1 ♗xc3 14.♖e3 ♗f6 (after 14...♕a5 15.♕e2 ♗a6 16.♖e8 ♕b6 17.♖xf8† ♔xf8 18.♘g5! White has a crushing attack) 15.♖xb5 ♕c8 16.d6± The threat is 17.♖xb7; White is clearly better.

13.♗f4 ♘a6

Or 13...♘d7 14.♕e2 ♖f7 15.♕xb5 ♘b6 16.c4 ♗f6 17.♖ab1± with a pleasant edge.

14.♕e2 ♗f6 15.♕xb5 ♖b8 16.♕d3

White's chances are better in view of Black's weaknesses such as the d6-pawn and e6-square.

B2) 6...d6 7.e4

This is White's idea, which is not so different from what Kramnik played against Alekseev, but perhaps it is a better version.

Here Black has two different ways of looking after the b-pawn, both worthy of independent investigation, **B21) 7...a6** and **B22) 7...b4**.

I should mention that 7...♘xe4? is simply bad:

8.♗xb5† ♗d7

8...♘d7 9.♕e2 ♕e7 10.0–0 looks horrible for Black.

9.♗xd7† ♘xd7

And now:



10.♕e2

This is much stronger than 10.0–0 ♗e7 11.♖e1 ♘ef6 12.♕e2 ♘xd5 13.♘c3, as recommended by Golubev, when Black can still fight after 13...♘xc3 14.bxc3 ♘f8!.

10...♕e7

Other options are even worse:

10...♘df6 11.♘h4! and Black cannot avoid losing material; and after 10...f5 11.♘h4 Black is losing at least a pawn.

11.0–0 ♘ef6 12.♕a6! ♘b8

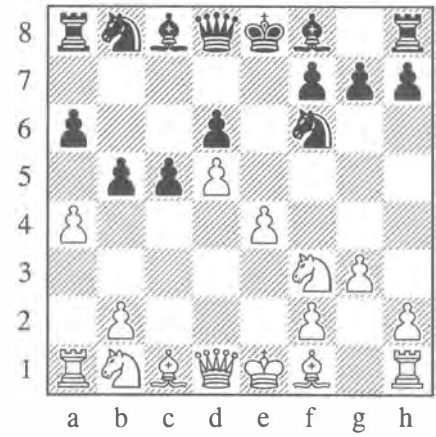
Black is losing after 12...♕d8 13.♖e1† ♗e7 14.♕xd6.

13.♕d3 ♕b7 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♖e1† ♗e7 17.♕e4

White's advantage is indisputable.

B21) 7...a6 8.a4!

This is White's main strategic idea. Before proceeding with normal development, White wants to gain some positional trumps on the queenside, in particular the c4-square for his knight. Instead Black is fine after 8.♗d3 ♗g4 9.♘bd2 ♘bd7 10.h3 ♘e5 11.♗c2 ♘xf3† 12.♘xf3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 g6 14.a4 ♗g7 15.0–0 0–0= as in Lysyj – Bocharov, Russia 2008.



8...b4?!

There is no point in 8...♕e7? as after 9.♗d3 Black still cannot take on e4 (also interesting 9.♗e2!?). 9...♘xe4? (somewhat better would be 9...♘xd5 10.axb5 ♘b4 11.0–0, but in this case White has a big lead in development with equal material) 10.0–0 f5 11.♘c3 White will crash straight through.

Probably better was:

8...♘xe4 9.axb5 ♗e7

This was suggested by Marin in his comments to the Gelfand – Aronian game that is mentioned below. But things are not so simple for Black, as White has a very dangerous idea at his disposal:

10.bxa6 0–0

The a6-pawn was untouchable in view of 11.♕a4† followed by 12.♕xe4.

11.a7!

This is the point; now Black needs to waste a few tempos to regain the pawn, while White gains other trumps.

11...♘d7

Bad is 11...♘a6 12.♗xa6 ♖xa7 13.♕d3 and White wins material.

12.♗d3 f5

Clearly inferior is 12...♘ef6 13.0–0 ♕b6 (Black can try to win the d5-pawn with 13...♗b7 14.♘c3 ♘b6, but White manages to seize the initiative: 15.♘h4! ♘bxd5

16.♘f5 Black's position is very dangerous, for example: 16...g6 17.♘xe7† ♕xe7 18.♗h6 ♖fe8 19.♗b5 and the a7-pawn should decide the game. Also dubious is 13...♕c7?! 14.♘c3 and Black cannot take on a7 in view of 15.♘b5.) 14.♖e1 ♖e8 15.♕a4 ♕b7 (preparing ...♘b6) 16.♗g5 ♘b6 17.♕h4! The following line is a good example of how the play might continue. Black is fighting to capture the a7-pawn, while White develops his own play. 17...♘bxd5 18.♘c3 h6 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗xe7 ♘xe7 21.♕e4 f5 22.♕xb7 ♗xb7 23.♘d2 And White wins.

13.0–0 ♕c7

Certainly not 13...♕b6 14.♕a4 and the a7-pawn is staying alive.

14.♘c3

White switches to positional play.

Instead the game would look rather unclear after 14.♕a4 ♗b7 15.♘c3 ♘b6 16.♕a5 ♖xa7! 17.♕xa7 ♖a8 with mutual chances.

14...♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♖xa7

Black has succeeded in regaining the pawn, but White still has positional pressure, thanks to his extra space and the black weaknesses that were created by the ...f7-f5 advance.

Risky is 15...c4 16.♗c2 ♖xa7 17.♖xa7 ♕xa7 18.♕e2 ♘c5 19.♗e3 and Black will lose the c4-pawn.

16.♖xa7 ♕xa7 17.♖e1 ♘b6

After 17...♘f6 18.♕c2! ♘e4 19.♗f4 sooner or later White will win a pawn, by capturing on e4.

18.c4 h6 19.♕c2

White has good positional pressure.

Now I believe that Boris Gelfand could have played a stronger move.

9.♘bd2!N

This move seems to force Black to develop his dark-squared bishop to e7, which is always inconvenient in the Benoni.

9.♗d3 g6

9...♗g4 10.♘bd2 ♘bd7 11.♘c4 ♗e7 12.a5± with a pleasant edge for White.

10.♘bd2 ♗g7 11.♘c4 0–0 12.♗f4 ♘e8

So far we have been following Gelfand – Aronian, Mexico World Championship 2007, and after the premature 13.a5?! Aronian obtained reasonable play with the nice 13...♗h3 14.♘g5 ♗d7, and Black's light-squared bishop found a good square on b5.

Instead Gelfand should have played:



13.0–0!N ♗g4

The point is that Black has no time for 13...a5, as it runs into 14.e5! dxe5 15.♘fxe5 opening up the play in White's favour.

14.♔g2 a5

14...♘d7 allows 15.a5! with a clear positional advantage: 15...♕e7 16.h3 ♗xf3† 17.♕xf3 ♘e5 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.♕e2 White's idea is to expand his control of the centre with the pawn pushes f2-f4 and e4-e5.

15.h3 ♗xf3† 16.♕xf3 ♘d7 17.♖ae1 ♘b6 18.♖e2 ♘xc4 19.♗xc4 ♘c7 20.h4

White has a stable edge.

9...♘bd7

The point behind my new idea is that

9...g6

does not work after:

10.♘c4! ♘xe4

10...♘bd7 11.♗g2!? ♘b6 12.♘xb6 ♕xb6 13.e5 dxe5 14.♘xe5 with a clear advantage.

Also pretty miserable is 10...♗g7 11.♗d3 0–0 12.♗f4 and Black has to play 12...♘e8, when he has very little to be happy about.

11.♗d3 f5

After 11...♘f6 12.0–0 ♗e7 13.♗h6 ♘g4 14.♕d2 it is hard to believe Black can hold this with his king stuck in the centre.

12.0–0 ♗g7

After 12...♗e7 13.♗h6 White has a strong initiative.

13.♗xe4 fxe4 14.♗g5 ♕d7 15.♘fd2

And Black's position collapses.

9...a5 10.♗b5† is also a disaster for Black.



10.a5!

10.♗d3 would allow 10...a5, which might slightly ease Black's task, as he will have the important resources of ...♘b6 and ...♗a6, attacking the white piece that will inevitably land on c4.

10...♗e7 11.♗d3 0–0 12.0–0

White has a dream version of the Benoni, as his knight has a perfect outpost on c4.

B22) 7...b4N

This is Black's best option. I believe the inclusion of the moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a6 should favour White, as he has the strong positional idea of putting his pawn on a5, taking control of the b6-square. This would deny a potentially useful square to Black's knight, and it also makes the a6-pawn a likely target.



8.♗b5†

This is a typical idea in Benoni-type positions.

8.♘bd2 is a worthy alternative, but perhaps not as strong as it would be with the inclusion of a2-a4 and ...a7-a6, as Black's knight can go to b6 and White cannot prevent this with a4-a5. 8...♘bd7 9.♗d3 (9.♘c4 is well met by 9...♘b6) 9...♗e7 (Black has no time to develop his bishop on g7: 9...g6 10.♘c4 ♘b6 11.e5! dxe5 12.♘cxe5 ♗g7 13.♗b5† ♗d7 14.♘xd7 ♘fxd7 15.♗g5 ♗f6 16.♕e2† ♔f8 17.♗h6† ♗g7 18.♗e3 White is better as the black king is very badly placed on f8.) 10.0–0 0–0 11.♖e1 ♘b6 Black has a reasonable position, though I would prefer White after 12.a3±.

8...♗d7

Black cannot play 8...♘bd7? as after 9.0–0 White will decisively break through in the centre with e4-e5.

9.♗d3

Of course White does not intend to exchange light-squared bishops: 9.♕e2 ♗xb5 10.♕xb5†

♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♗e7 12.0–0 0–0 13.a3 a5 Black would have comfortable play.

9...g6

Naturally Black's bishop will be more active on g7 than it would be on e7.

10.♘bd2

White would not achieve anything with 10.♗f4 ♘h5! 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗h6 (12.♗e3 ♗f6 is okay for Black) 12...♗f8 13.♗xf8 ♔xf8 14.0–0 ♗g4 and Black is fine after the exchange of dark-squared bishops.

10...♗g7 11.♘c4 0–0 12.♗f4

If 12.♘xd6?! ♗g4 and Black obtains a good position after either 13.♗f4 ♘h5 14.♘c4 ♘xf4 15.gxf4 ♕f6 or 13.♘c4 ♘xe4! 14.0–0 ♘d6.

12...♘e8 13.0–0 ♗b5

13...♗g4 leads to a more complicated struggle. 14.♖e1 ♘d7 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♘b6 17.♖e2 ♘xc4 18.♗xc4± White has a pleasant edge, as Black lacks sufficient counterplay.

14.♕c2



I believe White's chances are clearly preferable, as Black is really lacking his typical Benoni counterplay on the queenside, though the position remains very complicated.

Conclusion:

This hybrid variation of the Catalan and the Benoni was once considered a serious problem for White. However, recent theoretical developments have improved White's prospects with various versions of an e2-e4 gambit. The reader even has a choice of following my repertoire or Kramnik's.

Chapter 8

Benoni Systems



Snake Benoni

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 ♗d6

6.♘c3 0–0 7.♗g2

A) 7...♗e5 **103**
B) 7...♗c7 **104**
C) 7...♖e8 **105**

B) after 16...♖b8



17.♕d3!N

C) note to 10...♗xc3



17.♘d2!N

C) after 12...♘c6



13.♕b3!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 ♗d6

This is the Snake Benoni system, so called because the intended path of the bishop from f8-d6-c7-a5 resembles the slithering motion of the elongated reptile. Black's main plan involves using the "Snake Bishop" to assist the majority attack with his queenside pawns. If he is given time to play ...d6 after putting the bishop on c7, this plan has been shown to work surprisingly well in practice. Thus one of the key points of our strategy will be to play d5-d6 immediately after ...♗c7, which will severely hamper the development of Black's queenside.

6.♘c3 0–0 7.♗g2



This is the main branching position of the whole line. Black's main choices are **A) 7...♗e5**, **B) 7...♗c7** and **C) 7...♖e8**.

A) 7...♗e5

This move has been tried twice by Vugar Gashimov, but I am rather sceptical about Black's chances after giving up his dark-squared bishop.

8.♘f3 ♗xc3† 9.bxc3 d6 10.0–0 ♘bd7

If:

10...♖e8

White's play in the following encounter looks quite convincing:

11.♘d2 b6 12.e4 ♘bd7 13.f4

The natural 13.c4!? also comes into consideration.

13...♗a6 14.c4!

This move is much stronger than 14.♖e1 ♗d3 15.c4 b5 and Black has decent counterplay.

14...b5 15.♗b2!

The point behind the previous move. White sacrifices the c4-pawn in order to activate his dark-squared bishop.

15...bxc4 16.♗c3 ♖b8 17.g4

White has every chance of executing a successful attack, while Black has no real play on the queenside, Miljkovic – Marholev, Nis Mediana 2008.

11.a4

Also 11.♘d2 looks quite strong, for example 11...b5 12.a4 bxa4 13.♕xa4 ♘b6 14.♕a5 with a serious positional advantage, Glavina Rossi – Gashimov, Spain 2006.

I would like to point out that the natural-looking 11.c4 gives Black an opportunity to obtain counterplay in the style of the Benko Gambit: 11...b5!? 12.cxb5 a6 13.bxa6 ♗xa6 14.♖e1 ♖e8∓

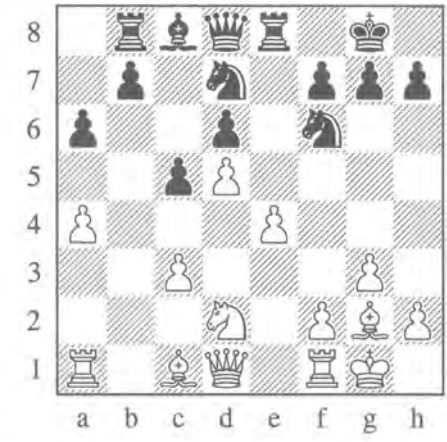
11...♖e8

11...♘b6 can be met comfortably by 12.♘h4.

12.♘d2 ♖b8

Other options do not improve Black's prospects, for example 12...b6 13.c4 ♕e7 14.e4±, or 12...♘e5 13.c4 followed by ♗b2. In both cases White's advantage is indisputable.

13.e4 a6



14.a5 b5

Naturally Black tries to create counterplay on the queenside.

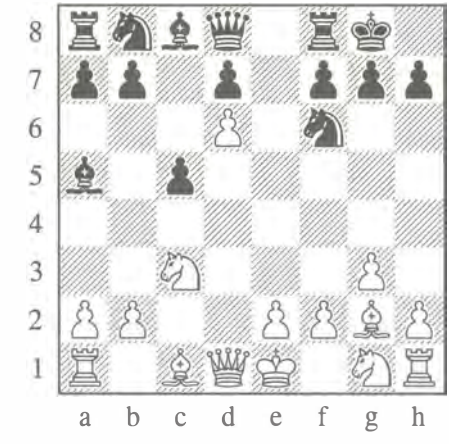
15.axb6 ♘xb6 16.c4 a5 17.♕c2 a4 18.♗b2

This was Gajewski – Janev, Lyon 2006. White's advantage is obvious, as his dark-squared bishop is tremendously powerful. Furthermore his extra central pawn on e4 is considerably more influential than the enemy wingman on a4.

B) 7...♗c7

This should be met by a standard reaction.

8.d6 ♗a5



9.♘h3!

This leads to a clearly improved version for White of the position from our main line, as the knight is better placed on h3 than on f3. One reason is that it does not block the light-squared bishop, while just as importantly, it is now much easier to push the central pawns.

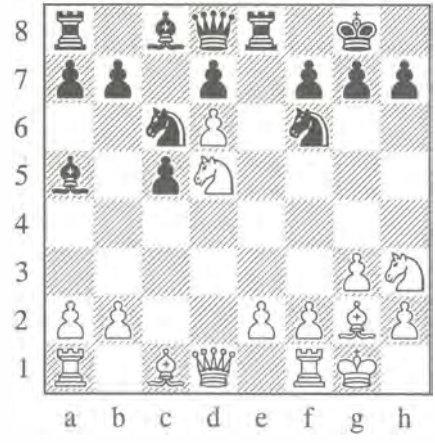
9...♘c6 10.0–0

I regard this position to be bordering on unplayable for Black. We will look at two recent examples, which clearly vindicate this evaluation.

10...♖e8

After 10...b6 11.e4 Black has very little chance to oppose White's offensive in the centre. 11...♗a6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.f4 g6 (Somewhat stronger was 13...h6, although White is clearly better after: 14.e5 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♘h7 16.♗d5±) 14.e5 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♘h5 16.♗d5 ♘g7 17.♘g5 ♖f8 18.♘e4! and White easily obtained a decisive attack in Khismatullin – Stupak, Minsk 2008.

11.♘d5!



This seems very strong, as it leaves Black's dark-squared bishop somewhat misplaced on a5 and exchanges a very important defender of his kingside.

11...♘xd5?

An unfortunate decision that only helps White to increase his pressure. Relatively best was 11...h6, but after 12.♘hf4 White is much better.

12.♗xd5 h6

Defending against the threat of ♘g5.

13.♘f4 ♕f6 14.♗e3 ♘d4 15.a3! ♗b6 16.♖c1 ♖b8



This position occurred in Avrukh – Khismatullin, Dresden 2007. Here I could have simply played:

17.♕d3!N

It is difficult to find a reasonable move for Black. He cannot play 17...♕xd6 in view of 18.b4!+– and Black unavoidably loses material.

C) 7...♖e8 8.♘f3 ♗c7

Black has also tried

8...♗f8

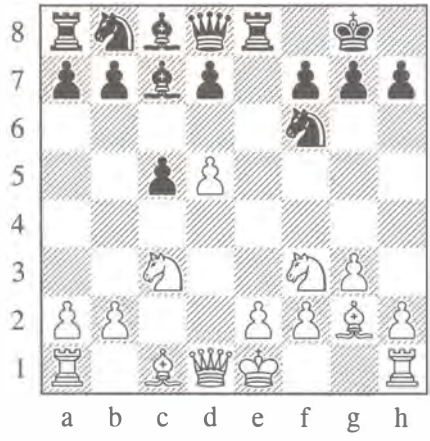
This looks pretty senseless to me, as I do not see any point in playing with a passive bishop on f8 instead of g7. I like the following example for White:

9.0–0

9.d6 runs into 9...♕b6! and Black is absolutely fine.

9...d6 10.♖e1 ♘a6 11.h3 ♘c7 12.a4 b6 13.e4 ♗b7 14.♕b3 ♖b8 15.♗f4 ♘h5 16.♗g5 f6 17.♗e3

With a clear advantage, Cvitan – Schwab, Oberwart 1994.



9.d6!

This is a key move in White's strategy. It is very important not to allow Black to consolidate his position with ...d6.

9.0–0 d6 has been played in many games, with Black achieving excellent results. If it were not for the d5-d6 idea, I would not hesitate to play this variation with Black.

9...♗a5 10.♘d2!

Another key move. It is very important for White to maintain control over the e4-square. In case of the natural 10.0–0 Black obtains reasonable play by means of 10...♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♘e4! 12.♕d3 ♕f6 13.♗f4 ♘c6 14.♖ac1 b6. I was unable to find anything special for White in this position.

10...♗xc3

I examined three alternatives.

10...♕b6 11.♘c4 ♗xc3† 12.bxc3 ♕a6

This looks like an interesting way to activate the queen. At the same time, she is now a long way from the kingside, which gives White the opportunity to play for an attack.

13.♕d3 ♘c6 14.♗g5 ♖e6

The critical line runs 14...b5 15.♘e3 ♘e5 (White is much better after 15...♖e6 16.♗xf6 ♖xf6 17.0–0 ♗b7 18.♖fb1!± as was correctly pointed out by Ehlvest in *Chess Informant 78*) 16.♕f5 ♗b7 17.♗xf6 ♗xg2 and now White gets a winning position by 18.♗xe5 ♗xh1 19.♕g5! ♖xe5 20.♕xe5+– as Black is helpless against the dual threats of 21.♘f5 and 21.f3.

15.♗h3

Also 15.♗xf6!? ♖xf6 16.0–0 leads to White's clear advantage.

15...b5 16.♗xe6 fxe6



Now in the game Gaprindashvili – Miezis, Hamburg 1999, White should have played:

17.♘d2!N

Black is left without any compensation for the exchange.

10...♘c6 11.0–0 ♗xc3 12.bxc3 b6 13.♖e1

A final preparatory move before pushing the central pawns.

13...♗a6

Relatively best would be 13...♗b7 14.e4 ♘e5 15.f4 ♘d3 16.♖e3 ♘xc1 17.♖xc1, though even here White enjoys a clear advantage.

14.f4!?

Also strong was the natural: 14.e4 ♘e5 15.f4 ♘d3 16.♖e3±

14...♖e3

Black tries to create some counterplay, but White has a strong idea at his disposal.

14...♕b8 was not much better: 15.e4 ♕xd6 16.e5 ♕e6 17.♘f3! and Black loses material in view of the threatened ♘g5.

15.♘f1! ♖xc3 16.♗b2 ♖c4 17.♘d2 ♖b4 18.♗c3 ♖c8 19.♗xb4 ♘xb4 20.a3 ♘c6 21.e4

White's advantage was already close to decisive, Ehlvest – Miezis, Geneva 1999.

10...♖e6



And now I like a new idea:

11.♘b3!?N

Attacking the c5-pawn.

Black obtained a reasonable game after 11.♘c4 ♗xc3† 12.bxc3 ♘c6 13.0–0 b6 in Tunik – Matros, Chelyabinsk 1991.

11...♗b6

Another option is: 11...♗xc3† 12.bxc3 ♕b6 13.♗f4 ♘e4 14.♕c2 ♘xd6 15.0–0± Despite the extra pawn Black's position looks pretty grim, as it is hard to believe he will be able to develop his queenside conveniently.

12.0–0 ♘c6

12...c4 13.♘d2 ♖xd6 14.♕c2± followed by ♘c4 gives White a clear edge.

13.♗f4±

White's advantage is obvious, as Black has serious problems developing his queenside.

11.bxc3 ♕a5

This idea has been employed three times by Miezis, who is probably the world's foremost "Snake" expert. Attempting to play actively seems like the best chance for Black to obtain a reasonable game.

12.0–0 ♘c6

It is too risky to grab the c-pawn.

12...♕xc3

This not only costs time, but also clears the long diagonal for White's dark-squared bishop. Here is an illustrative example:

13.♖b1 ♕d4 14.♗b2 ♕xd6 15.♗xf6! ♕xf6 15...gxf6 16.♘e4 ♕xd1 17.♖fxd1± and White will regain the material with dividends.

16.♘e4 ♖xe4

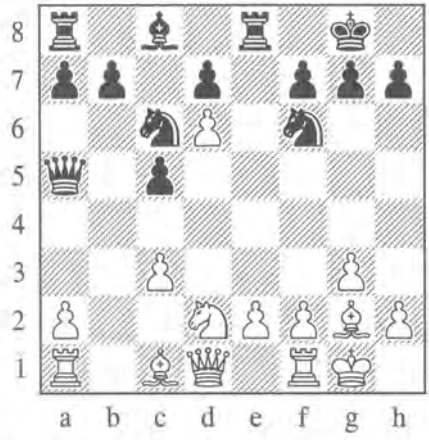
Otherwise the knight comes to d6.

17.♗xe4 ♘c6 18.♕d3 ♘b4?

If 18...g6 19.♖fd1 Black will still experience serious problems developing his queenside, but this was relatively the best option.

19.♕e3! d6 20.a3 ♘a2 21.♗xb7 ♗xb7 22.♖xb7±

White's material advantage decided Ibragimov – Miezis, Cappelle la Grande 1998.



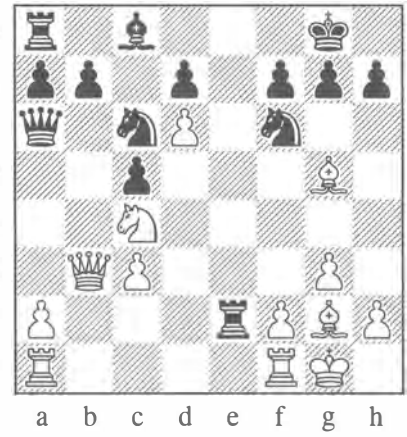
13.♕b3!N

This is my improvement over 13.♖e1 ♕xc3 14.♖b1 ♕d4 15.♗b2 ♕xd6 16.e4⩱. White has interesting compensation, although having given up two pawns the situation is rather double-edged, Gattea – Miezis, Bled 2002.

13...♖xe2

Another line is 13...♕a6 14.e4 b5 15.f4 ♘g4 16.♘f3 c4 17.♕c2 ♕b6† 18.♔h1± and White is much better positionally.

14.♘c4 ♕a6 15.♗g5!



White has a powerful initiative being only a single pawn down. Although there is nothing forced, I would not be surprised if his position is close to winning already.

Conclusion:

Although the idea of manoeuvring the bishop from f8 to a5 may appear artificial, it can prove highly effective against a stereotyped reaction from White. However, with the help of the move d5-d6 White can seriously obstruct the development of his opponent's queenside. White must be sure to follow this idea with resolute play, and should not be afraid to sacrifice material if the position demands it. I believe that the contents of the present chapter represent quite a serious challenge to the future of the Snake Benoni, and it remains to be seen whether Black will find a way to solve his opening problems.





Benoni Systems

Benoni without ...♘f6

Variation Index

1.d4 e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6

5.♘c3 g6 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.g3 ♘e7 8.♗g2 0–0 9.0–0 a6 10.a4

A) 10...h6 **110**
B) 10...♘f5 **111**
C) 10...♘d7 **111**

A) note to 13...♗d7



16.♘xe5!N

A) after 13...♗d7



14.c4!?N

C) after 15...♗b7



16.♕c1!N

1.d4 e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6

Another common move order to reach this position is 1.d4 c5 2.d5 e6 3.c4 exd5 4.cxd5 d6, although in this case White also has the chance to play 3.♘c3, as covered in Chapter 12. Heading for the Benoni via either of these move orders gives Black additional options when developing his king's knight.

Instead 4...b5?! would be positionally suspect: 5.e4 a6 6.a4! This thematic move forces Black to give up control of the c4-square. 6...b4 7.♘f3 d6 Now I propose the following arrangement: 8.♘bd2N ♘f6 9.♗d3 ♗e7 10.♘c4 White has a clear edge, thanks to his strong knight on c4.

5.♘c3 g6 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.g3

Usually after 7...♘f6 the game transposes to a normal Benoni, but the black knight has two other possibilities:

7...♘e7

Another option is to develop this knight to h6 after:

7...a6 8.a4 ♘h6

8...♘e7 9.♗g2 0–0 10.0–0 would transpose to our main line.

9.♗g2 0–0 10.0–0 ♘d7

Once again 10...♘f5 leads to a position we will examine in the 7...♘e7-line.



11.♗f4N

The diagram position has been reached only twice and White's play was unconvincing in both cases. The text seems the most natural and is good enough for an advantage. I examined the following lines:

11...♕e7 12.h3!

This important quiet move prevents the h6-knight activating via the g4-square.

12...f6

Instead 12...♘f5 does not really work in view of 13.g4 ♘d4 14.♘d2! and Black is in trouble due to the threat of 15.e3.

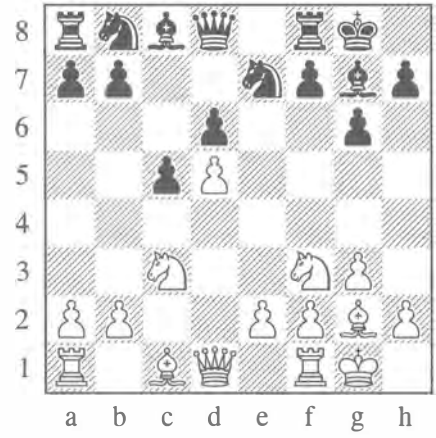
13.♖b1

This is a thematic plan in Benoni-type positions; when Black's dark-squared bishop is blocked, White starts his play on the queenside.

13...♘f7 14.b4 f5 15.♕c2±

White's chances are preferable.

8.♗g2 0–0 9.0–0



9...a6

An important alternative is:

9...♘a6 10.♗f4

This looks like the best way of fighting for an opening advantage. Black is doing fine after 10.♘d2 ♘c7 11.♘c4 ♘f5.

10...♘c7 11.e4 ♗g4

Black has to do something against the threat of e4-e5. Clearly inferior would be 11...b5?!

12.e5 ♘f5 13.g4±.

12.a4N

It is essential to prevent the thematic ...b7-b5 advance.

Instead Paciencia – Efimov, Dresden (ol) 2008, continued 12.♖e1 and now I do not understand why Black refrained from the natural 12...b5 13.e5 ♘f5 with typical active Benoni play.

12...f5

It is obvious that Black must somehow justify the passivity of his knights.

If 12...♕d7 then White should continue 13.♕b3 with the idea of 13...a6?! 14.♘d2 b5 15.f3! and Black has problems.

13.♕b3 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘f5

An exchange sacrifice is certainly not going to work: 14...♖xf4 15.gxf4 ♘cxd5 16.♘c3±.

15.♖ae1 h6

15...b6 is met strongly by 16.♘eg5 and the knight penetrates effectively to e6.

16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3

The absence of Black's light-squared bishop will make White's chances preferable, especially in a long fight.

10.a4



This is one of Black's main branching points. He has three significant possibilities: **A) 10...h6**, **B) 10...♘f5** and **C) 10...♘d7**.

A) 10...h6

Now our favourite ♗f4 would make no sense in view of a possible ...g6-g5, so we switch to another thematic idea.

11.♘d2 ♘d7 12.♘c4 ♘b6 13.♘a3

White plays in similar style to our main line against the Modern Benoni.

13...♗d7

Black has also tried a risky advance:

13...g5 14.a5 ♘d7 15.♘c4

We have followed a very natural sequence.

15...♘e5

Now in the game Tondivar – Dambacher, Hoogeveen 2006, White missed a great chance to develop a dangerous initiative:



16.♘xe5!N ♗xe5 17.f4! ♗d4†

Or 17...gxf4 18.♗xf4! ♗xf4 19.♖xf4 ♘g6 20.♖f2 f5 21.♕c2, followed by ♖af1 and e2-e4. White's initiative is extremely dangerous, due to the exposed position of the black king.

18.e3 ♗g7 19.e4

Also worth considering is 19.fxg5 hxg5 20.♕h5 f6 21.e4±.

19...♘g6

Another possibility is: 19...gxf4 20.gxf4 ♘g6 (20...♗d4† 21.♔h1 f5 22.e5! is dangerous for Black) 21.f5! ♘e5 22.♘a4! White is clearly better, as he successfully combines

tactical ideas, such as ♘b6 and f5-f6, with the simple ♖a3-g3 (or h3) manoeuvre.

20.fxg5 hxg5 21.♕h5 g4 22.♗g5

Next White will play ♗f6.

Returning to the main line, I do not like the move 14.a5, as played in Mocanu – Grebeniuk, Ukraine 2007, as it gifts a nice square on b5 to Black's bishop, so instead I propose:



14.e4!?N

With the following interesting variation:

14...f5

After 14...♕c7 White simply continues developing his pieces with 15.♗e3±.

15.a5

Now is a more suitable moment for this thematic advance.

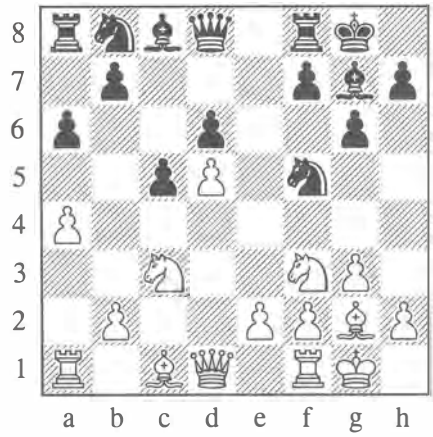
15...♘bc8 16.♘c4 ♗b5 17.♕b3 ♕d7

Or 17...♗xc4 18.♕xc4 b5 19.axb6 ♘xb6 20.♕e2 and White is obviously better.

18.e5! ♗xc4 19.♕xc4 ♗xe5 20.♗xh6

White is clearly better, as he has good chances of whipping up an attack against the seriously exposed black king.

B) 10...♘f5



11.♗f4N ♕e7

Premature would be 11...h6 as after 12.e4! ♘d4 13.♘xd4 Black cannot recapture with his bishop, since his h6-pawn would be hanging, while after 13...cxd4 14.♘e2 g5 15.♗c1 Black's position looks extremely suspect.

12.h3

This is an important move in White's strategy; now Black must watch out for the idea of g3-g4.

12...h5

After 12...♘d7 White's idea works perfectly: 13.g4! ♘d4 14.♘d2± And the idea of 15.e3 is annoying.

13.e4

Since Black has weakened his kingside it is an especially suitable time to start active play.

13...♘d4 14.♘xd4 ♗xd4 15.♕d2

White is much better, as illustrated by the following possible line:

15...♘d7 16.♗g5! ♗f6 17.♗xf6 ♘xf6 18.f4±

White has fantastic play.

C) 10...♘d7 11.♗f4

Another interesting option is 11.e4 with the

idea of meeting 11...♘e5 with 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.f4 ♗d4† 15.♔h1 with excellent attacking prospects.

11...♘f6



12.h3 h6

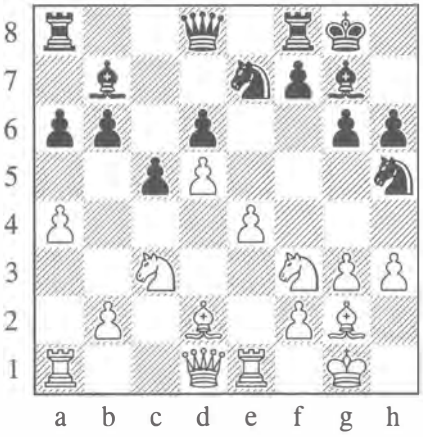
Black's main problem is his misplaced knight on e7. Also he could hardly be satisfied with 12...♘h5 13.♗d2 f5 14.♘g5! and as usual White's knight causes trouble when it penetrates to e6.

13.e4 ♘h5 14.♗d2 b6

Again 14...f5 does not work in view of 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♘h4 ♘f6 17.♖e1± with a difficult position for Black.

15.♖e1 ♗b7

So far this is Akesson – M. Ivanov, Gausdal 2006. White's positional advantage is obvious, due to Black's badly placed minor pieces (the b7-bishop and h5-knight). I am really fond of the following idea:



16.♕c1!N ♔h7 17.♕c2!

White can slowly continue his mobilization, while it is hard for Black to gain any counterplay. Of course he cannot strike with:

17...f5?

Since after:

18.exf5 gxf5 19.g4 ♘f6 20.♘h4±

Black loses material.

Conclusion:

The lines of the Benoni where Black avoids ...♘f6 are potentially effective as surprise weapons, but if White follows my recommended lines an edge is all but guaranteed. The unpopularity of Black's lines in this chapter is no mystery when we note that his king's knight is often a problem piece – and it had such an appealing square available on f6.

Chapter 10

Benoni Systems



Reluctant Benoni

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♘c3 g6 5.♘f3 ♗g7

6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2

A) 7...e5 8.0–0 115
- **A1) 8...♘g4** 115
- **A2) 8...♘a6** 116
- **A3) 8...♘e8** 117
- **A4) 8...♘h5** 118

B) 7...♘a6 8.0–0 ♘c7 9.a4 119
- **B1) 9...♘a6** 120
- **B2) 9...♖b8** 121
 - **B21) 10...b6** 121
 - **B22) 10...♗g4** 124

A2) after 12...a6



13.♘d3!N

B21) note to 11...♗g4



17.♗e3!N

B21) after 14...e6



15.♗f4N

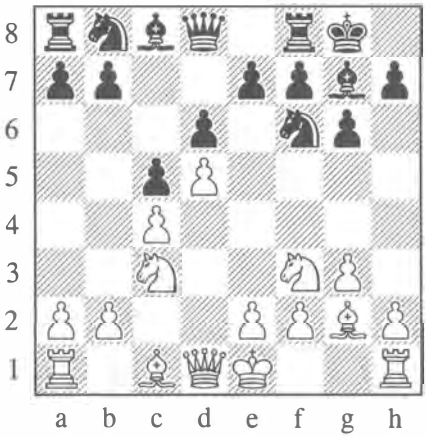
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♘c3 g6

We shall call this line "The Reluctant Benoni" – Black seems to be on his way to a real Benoni, but his e-pawn is not totally convinced yet. Despite being a rare guest in high-level chess, the line seems rather reliable. The play will often transpose to the Modern Benoni, but there are also independent lines with their own theory. In general there will be positional play, with many nuances that I will try to cover in this chapter.

5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.g3

Naturally I recommend a fianchetto system, which fits well with our repertoire.

6...0–0 7.♗g2



This is the initial position of the whole system. Black has three possible ways to develop his play, not taking into account 7...e6, which after 8.0–0 exd5 9.cxd5 would transpose to the Modern Benoni. The main lines are **A) 7...e5** and **B) 7...♘a6**, but first we should deal with a minor line:

7...a6

It is important to understand that we should usually react to ...a7-a6 with a2-a4, preventing a possible pawn sacrifice in Benko-style.

8.a4

The problem with 8.0–0 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 10.♘xb5 is that besides the natural 10...♗a6, which would transpose to a normal Benko Gambit after 11.♘c3, Black has additional interesting options such as 10...♘a6 and 10...♘bd7.

8...e5

Once again 8...e6 9.0–0 exd5 10.cxd5 just leads to the Modern Benoni.

9.0–0

Now I examined:

9...♘e8 10.e4 b6 11.♗e3!

It is important not to allow Black an immediate ...f7-f5 advance. For example, 11.♘e1 f5 12.♘d3 ♘f6 leads to decent play for Black.

11...♘d7

A standard point is that 11...f5 leads to an inferior position after 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♘g5!. While after 11...h6 12.♕d2 ♔h7 13.♘e1 f5 14.♘d3 a5 (White was ready to attack on the queenside with 15.a5 or 15.b4) 15.f4 White has the advantage.

12.♕d2 ♖b8 13.♘e1 ♘c7 14.♘d3 f5

White is just in time to meet 14...b5 with the thematic 15.cxb5 axb5 16.b4!.



15.f3!

We are following a game by Korchnoi, and this instructive move shows his deep understanding. White could not play 15.b4 because 15...f4 works fine for Black. Despite

only pushing his f-pawn to f3, White is still also considering playing the f4-break, but he is clever enough to wait for a better moment.

15...a5

White was of course intending to play 16.b4.

16.f4!

Now this is much stronger, as White has the bonus of a fine square on b5 for his knight

16...exf4 17.♗xf4

White was clearly better in Korchnoi – Kotkov, Molotov (4) 1956.

A) 7...e5

This leads to a closed position of a type that is considered favourable for White.

8.0–0

It is well known that White fails to gain any advantage after 8.dxe6 ♗xe6 9.♘g5 in view of the typical exchange sacrifice 9...♗xc4! 10.♗xb7 ♘bd7 11.♗xa8 ♕xa8 12.0–0 d5, with plenty of counterplay.



This is a key moment where the play divides into four options, depending on which knight Black feels like moving and where. The variations are **A1) 8...♘g4**, **A2) 8...♘a6**, **A3) 8...♘e8** and **A4) 8...♘h5**.

A1) 8...♘g4 9.e4 ♘h6

Black's idea is to play ...f6, ...♘f7 and only then ...f5, or ...f7-f5 at once if White first moves his f3-knight backwards.

The immediate ...f7-f5 allows a nasty knight invasion:

9...f5 10.♘g5

In general it seems Black should not allow White's knight to penetrate to e6.

10...♔h8 11.♘e6 ♗xe6 12.dxe6 ♘c6

Grachev – A. Zhigalko, Budva 2003. Now I recommend:

13.exf5!?N gxf5 14.h3 ♘f6

14...♘h6 drops a pawn after 15.♘b5!.

15.g4 fxg4 16.hxg4

White is in total control, due to the disappearance of Black's light-squared bishop.

10.♘e1

In my opinion White's best plan is to place his knight on d3 and then follow up with f2-f4.

10...f5 11.♘d3 ♘d7 12.f4 ♕e7



13.♖e1!?N

This is a natural improvement over the slow 13.♔h1 as played in B. Abramovic – N. Grigore, Obrenovac 2004.

13...fxe4 14.♘xe4

Now my illustrative line continues:

14...♘f7

Instead 14...♘f5 only looks active, and after 15.♗d2 ♘d4 16.♗c3 it is not clear how Black should proceed.

15.♗d2

I believe White has the advantage, thanks to his better coordinated pieces.

15...♘b6 16.♕b3 ♗f5 17.♗c3

With a pleasant edge.

A2) 8...♘a6 9.e4 ♘c7

There is no need for White to prevent ...b7-b5 with 10.a4, as the following line shows:

10.♘e1! b5

Black also has 10...♖b8 and now I found 11.♘c2! (this is stronger than 11.♘d3 b5 when White has no time for b2-b4) 11...b5 12.b4! with the following thematic line: 12...bxc4 13.bxc5 dxc5 14.♘e3 ♘fe8 15.♗a3 White has strong positional pressure.

11.cxb5 ♖b8

Another option for Black is:

11...a6 12.bxa6 ♗xa6 13.♘d3

I am always rather sceptical about Black's "Benko-style" compensation when his dark-squared bishop is blocked by its own e5-pawn.

13...♘b5 14.♘xb5 ♗xb5

This position was reached in Schreiner – Schwierskott, Bavaria 2004. Now I worked out the following line for White:

15.a4N ♗a6

Or 15...c4 16.♘b4 ♕a5 17.♘c6 ♗xc6 18.dxc6 ♕c5 19.♗d2 ♕xc6 20.♕c2 and White is better, due to his dangerous a-pawn and the bishop pair.

16.♕c2 ♖b8 17.b3

With the following nice idea:

17...♕b6 18.♖a3 ♖fc8

...c5-c4 looks unstoppable, but White has prepared a fine positional exchange sacrifice:



19.♘b2! ♗xf1 20.♗xf1

I believe White's chances are much better.

12.a4 a6

And now instead of 13.♘c2, as in Pfleger – Shirazi, Lone Pine 1981, which is probably good enough for an advantage, I prefer the more thematic:



13.♘d3!N axb5 14.b4

We shall have a look at a few illustrative lines:

14...c4 15.♘b2 bxa4

15...♗d7 16.♗d2 is simply better for White.

16.♘xc4 ♖xb4

The main strategic idea is once again connected with a positional exchange sacrifice: 16...♗a6 17.♘a5 ♗xf1 18.♗xf1 ♕d7 19.♘c6 ♖b6 20.b5± White is clearly on top.

17.♖xa4 ♖xa4 18.♕xa4 ♗a6 19.♗e3

White has serious positional pressure.

A3) 8...♘e8 9.e4

Now we shall examine the three continuations that in my opinion are the most natural:



9...h6

If Black intends to carry out ...f7-f5, then he should cover the g5-square, because the immediate break runs into trouble:

9...f5 10.exf5 gxf5

10...♗xf5 does not help after 11.♘g5.

11.♘g5 ♘c7

This seems to be the most stubborn.

White's advantage is obvious after 11...♘f6 12.♘e6 ♗xe6 13.dxe6 ♘c6 14.♘d5. For example, 14...♖b8 15.♗g5 ♕e8 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 18.♕xd6± Andreas Martin – Ebert, Germany 1998.

Now I like the following example:

12.♘b5! ♘xb5 13.cxb5

So far this is J. Cobb – G. Morris, Wales (ch) 2008, and now the following line illustrates a typical idea for White:

13...e4 14.♘e6 ♗xe6 15.dxe6 ♕e7 16.♕d5 ♖e8 17.♗h3

White has a clear advantage.

Black could try to execute his main idea with the help of trading his light-squared bishop for White's knight, but then the missing bishop will be significant later, as was shown in the following encounter:

9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘d7 12.♕e2 ♘c7 13.♗d2 ♕e7

Now (and previously) Black refrains from ...f7-f5 due to the following reaction: 13...f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.g4± and Black loses the battle for the e4-square.

14.♖ab1 ♖ac8 15.♖fe1

The immediate 15.a3 also comes into consideration.

15...f5

Black decides to act, but perhaps a waiting strategy was better.

16.exf5 gxf5 17.g4! ♔h8 18.gxf5 ♖xf5 19.♘e4

White was firmly in control in Semenyuk – S. Kogan, corr. 1975.

10.♘h4 ♔h7

Black insists on preparing ...f7-f5, but his king will be vulnerable on h7.

It is important that White can meet 10...a6 with the calm 11.♖b1 and if 11...b5 then 12.b4 cxb4 13.♖xb4± and opening up the position on the queenside is usually in White's favour.

11.♗d2 ♗f6

Black avoids 11...f5, which is an understandable decision, as after 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♕h5 ♕f6 14.g4! Black is in trouble.

12.♘f3 ♗g5

This is too artificial; the absence of dark-squared bishops will be a decisive factor in what follows. Instead a better option would have been 12...♗g7, although after 13.♘e1 f5 14.♘d3, followed by 15.f4, the complications will favour White.

13.♘xg5† hxg5 14.f4!

This is the only way for White to cast doubt on Black's strategy.

14...gxf4 15.gxf4 exf4 16.♕f3!

White developed a dangerous initiative after:

16...♘d7 17.♕xf4 ♘e5 18.♕h6† ♔g8 19.♗g5 f6 20.♗f4±

This was Avrukh – Weisbuch, Biel 2008.

A4) 8...♘h5

This knight can sometimes be vulnerable on h5, and Black will fail to find a good moment to play his standard idea (the ...f7-f5 advance).

9.e4



9...h6

Covering the g5-square. Let's have a look at the other possibilities:

9...f5

This will not work out well for Black.

10.exf5 ♗xf5

If 10...gxf5 then White can play not only 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.♘e6 (which we have seen in the 8...♘e8-line) but also 11.♘xe5 ♘xg3 12.hxg3 ♗xe5 (or 12...dxe5 13.d6! is also clearly better for White) 13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.♖e1 and White's positional advantage is indisputable.

11.♘g5 ♘f6

This position is from the game Ustinov – Sanditov, St Petersburg 1998, and now White had a simple chance:



12.♘e6!N ♗xe6 13.dxe6 ♘c6 14.♗g5 ♖e8 15.♗d5

This would have secured White a clear advantage.

Black has also tried to prepare the ...f7-f5 advance with:

9...a6 10.a4 ♕e8

But after:

11.a5! f5 12.exf5

Black has to recapture with the bishop.

12...♗xf5

The problem is that 12...gxf5 13.♘g5 ♘f6 14.♘a4! looks horrible for Black.

13.♘g5 ♘f6 14.♘e6

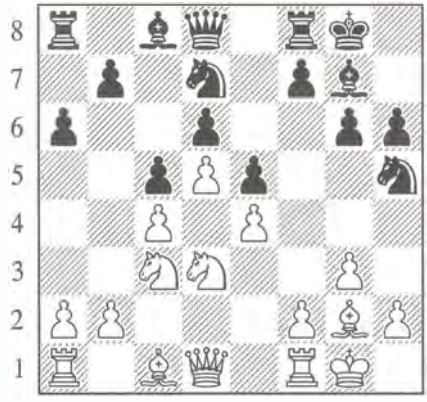
In Mikanovic – Pestov, Ottawa 2007, White was clearly better, due to the following variation:

14...♗xe6 15.dxe6 ♕xe6 16.♗xb7 ♖a7 17.♗g2 ♘bd7 18.♕d3

10.♘e1

The white knight is heading for d3, where it will help both the f2-f4 and b2-b4 ideas, while at the same time the ...f7-f5 advance is hardly possible.

10...♘d7 11.♘d3 a6



This position was reached in Grebionkin – Klimenko, Internet 2004, and now I believe White should play a simple developing move:

12.♗e3!?N

Not fearing:

12...b5

As it is strongly met by:

13.cxb5 axb5 14.b4

And now if:

14...c4

Then White gains a clear edge as follows:

15.♘b2

White's next move is likely to be 16.a4.

B) 7...♘a6

This is Black's main choice according to theory, and the most flexible move in the position. Black intends to prepare the thematic ...b7-b5 advance, which should allow him to obtain counterplay on the queenside, while at the same time he keeps the option of changing the central pawn structure with either ...e7-e6 or ...e7-e5.

8.0–0 ♘c7 9.a4

I decided to make my choice in favour of the text move. Equally popular is 9.e4, although the lines often transpose to each other.



This is an important branching point for Black. The main choices are **B1) 9...♘a6** and **B2) 9...♖b8**.

Before analysing them, we must deal with three minor options:

9...e6 I have decided to recommend the principled 10.dxe6, which will be examined below in the 9...e5-line. In order to explain my choice let's have a quick look at White's alternatives:

10.e4 exd5 11.cxd5 ♗g4 and Black has good play.

10.h3 exd5 11.cxd5 leads to the Modern Benoni, but the position is a bit different than the one I analyse in the Modern Benoni chapter.

9...b6 I suggest the following line: 10.e4 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3N (two games have instead continued 12.♕xf3, but then it is easier for Black to prepare ...b6-b5 with 12...a6∞) 12...a6 13.♗g5 And here I believe the play should transpose to our main line after 13...♖b8 14.♗e2.

9...e5 10.dxe6

A serious alternative is 10.e4, but I decided to concentrate on 10.dxe6.

10...♗xe6

Less challenging for White is 10...♘xe6. White is firmly in control after 11.a5 ♕e7 (I also checked 11...a6 12.♕d3 ♕e7 13.♖d1 ♖d8 14.♖a3 with a pleasant edge) Now 12.♕d3!N is a significant improvement on 12.♘g5, as played in Tann – Bijzitter, e-mail 2002. After 12...♖d8 13.♖d1 White has positional pressure.

11.♗f4 ♗xc4 12.♗xd6 ♖e8



This position has been tested a few times and the most common move 13.♗xc5 has failed to pose Black any major problems. I believe a more unusual move is called for:

13.♘d2!? ♕xd6

I do not see serious compensation for the pawn after 13...♗a6 14.♗xc5 (and 14.♘b3 also deserves serious consideration).

14.♘xc4 ♕e6 15.♕d6! ♕xc4 16.♕xc7

Black will lose the b7-pawn.

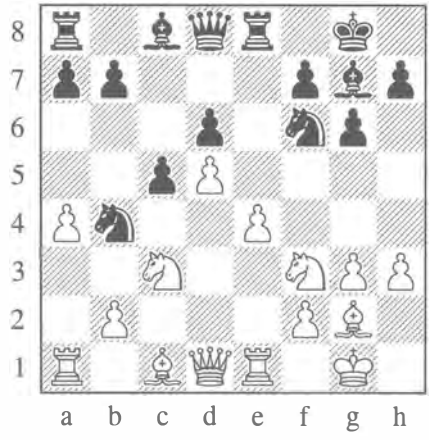
B1) 9...♘a6

Of course the b4-square was weakened by White's last move, but the black knight will only look good on b4. In fact, it hardly has any influence on the play.

10.h3 ♘b4 11.e4 e6 12.♖e1

Instead 12.dxe6 ♗xe6 13.♕e2 ♘c6! is rather unclear, but 12.♗g5 might be a serious alternative.

12...exd5 13.cxd5 ♖e8



This position was reached in Psakhis – Ibarra Jerez, Andorra 2003, and now I believe White can retain an edge with a simple move:

14.♗f4N

One point is that White is ready to meet ...c5-c4, as the following line shows:

14...c4

Or 14...a6 15.♕d2 is more pleasant for White.

15.♗f1!

Now it is not so easy to move for Black, as White is threatening the quiet ♔h2, threatening the c4-pawn.

B2) 9...♖b8

This is Black's main choice, according to theory.

10.e4



This is another position where Black has a wide choice. The main lines are **B21) 10...b6** and **B22) 10...♗g4**. But first there is a lesser line to dismiss:

10...a6

Black quickly prepares his usual idea of ...b7-b5, but in this case it allows White a new option:

11.a5 b5 12.axb6 ♖xb6

Black has executed his main idea, but he fails to gain much counterplay on the half-open b-file and his knight on c7 remains passive.

13.♖a3

A quiet positional move with the idea of neutralizing Black's planned pressure along the b-file and on the long diagonal; White intends to play b2-b3 at a suitable moment.

13...e6

The most principled move, but 13...e5 14.dxe6 also leads to the same thing.

Instead 13...♘d7 is rather passive. White had a pleasant edge in Drasko – Bakic, Vrnjacka Banja 1998, after 14.♘a4 ♖b8 15.♗f4.



14.dxe6!

There is no reason to allow a typical Benoni-type pawn structure after ...e6xd5.

14...♗xe6

Another option is 14...♘xe6, but White maintains a pleasant edge after 15.h3 ♖e8 16.♖e1 ♗b7 17.b3±.

15.♕d3 ♘g4 16.♘a4 ♖b4 17.b3

White had a pleasant edge in Korchnoi – Visier Segovia, Palma de Mallorca 1968.

B21) 10...b6

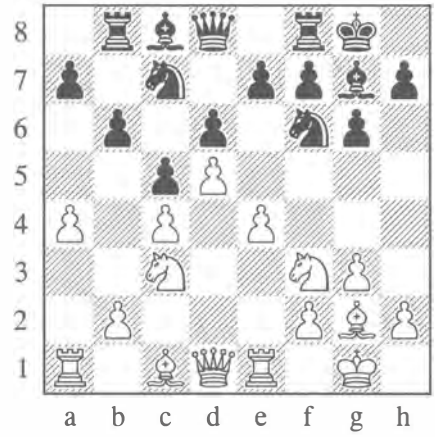
Black wants to prepare the ...b6-b5 advance without allowing White to hobble his queenside with a4-a5.

11.♖e1

I think this is the most promising continuation. White not only strengthens the e4-e5 advance, but also vacates the f1-square for his bishop, where it can help stop the ...b6-b5 advance. To gain a deeper understanding, let's have a quick look at the other options:

11.e5 There is no point rushing with this move, as after 11...♘g4 12.exd6 exd6 13.♖e1 a6 Black obtains a perfectly playable position.

11.h3 looks quite natural, taking the g4-square away from the black bishop, but Black gains normal play after 11...a6 12.e5 ♘d7 13.exd6 exd6 14.♗f4 ♘f6 and ...b6-b5 is coming next.



11...♗g4

Black also has a completely different plan available:

11...a6 12.♗f1

As noted above, this is one of the ideas of White's 11th move.

12...♗d7

Black plays for ...b6-b5, but obviously 12...♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 would transpose to 11...♗g4.

13.e5 ♘fe8 14.h3!

This important prophylactic move stops Black getting rid of his passive light-squared bishop.

Instead Black gained a defendable position after 14.♗f4 b5 15.axb5 axb5 16.b3 bxc4 17.bxc4 ♗g4 in Slepoy – A. Geller, Leningrad 1956.

14...b5 15.b3

White has no need to surrender any space on the queenside, though 15.axb5 axb5 16.b3 was also possible.

15...bxc4

Obviously closing the queenside would leave Black with a strategically difficult position: 15...b4 16.♘e4 f5 17.exf6 (even 17.♘xc5 dxc5 18.♗e3!? comes into consideration) 17...♘xf6 (probably the lesser evil would have been 17...exf6 though White is better after 18.♗f4 ♗f5 19.♖a2! with the idea of ♖ae2) 18.♖a2 ♘xe4 19.♖xe4 ♗f5 20.♖e1 ♘e8 21.♖ae2 ♖b7 22.♗g5± White is in control, Donner – Iskov, Amsterdam 1982.

16.bxc4 e6



This was played in C. Gokhale – L. Davies, Canada 2006, and it looks rather principled, as Black is trying to activate his passive pieces. Unfortunately for Black, there is a problem:

17.♗e3!N

It is not clear how Black can save his c5-pawn.

12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 a6 14.♗f1

This is an important position to understand what is happening in this line.



14...e6

Three games have reached the position after the text move, but White's play was far from

convincing, so I worked out a new strategy. Before we get to that, we need to consider what happens if Black pushes the e-pawn a square further:

14...e5

White could play 15.♗g5 (which will transpose to our 14...e6 main line!) but I would like to offer an additional possibility:



15.a5!?N

In practice White has tried only 15.♖b1 and 15.♗d3, both of which look too slow.

15...b5

This is the critical reply.

If 15...bxa5 then 16.♘d1 ♘d7 17.♗d3, followed by ♗d2-a5, and White regains the pawn and gains space on the queenside.

16.cxb5 axb5

The other recapture is inferior for Black: 16...♘xb5 17.♘xb5 axb5 18.a6 ♕b6 19.a7 ♖a8 20.♗g5 ♘d7 21.♕a3 Black is in trouble, for example: 21...♖fc8 22.♖ec1 b4 23.♕a4 ♘f6 24.♗xf6 ♗xf6 25.♕a5±

17.a6 ♖a8

Another option is 17...b4, but Black ends up in a difficult position after 18.♘b1 ♖a8 19.♗g5! when the following line is possible: 19...h6 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♘d2 ♗g5 22.♘b3 ♕c8 23.h4 ♗e7 24.a7!±

18.♘xb5 ♘xa6

Instead 18...♖xa6 does not bring Black relief either, as after 19.♖xa6 ♘xa6 20.♗d2, followed by 21.♕a3, White has persistent pressure.

19.♕e2

This creates the threat of 20.♘xd6.

19...♘c7 20.♖xa8 ♘xa8 21.♗d2 ♕b6 22.b4±

White has a risk-free initiative.

14...♘d7

This has been played only once, but it looks flexible, as Black keeps the option of playing either ...e6 or ...e5.

15.♖b1

I like this move, as it could be useful for White to have the option of b2-b4, particularly if Black closes the centre with ...e7-e5.

15...e6 16.♗d2 ♘e5

This move is connected with a mistaken idea; probably Black should play more patiently.

17.♕d1 ♕f6

Black continues down a bad road.

18.f4 ♘xc4?

Black has overlooked a straightforward refutation and now he loses material.

Better was 18...♘d7, although after 19.dxe6 ♘xe6 (or 19...fxe6 20.♗e3) 20.♗e3 ♘d4 21.♗g2 White retains a pleasant edge.

19.e5! dxe5 20.♗xc4

White had a big advantage in L. Lengyel – Ribli, Hungary (ch) 1967.



15.♗f4N

White eyes the d6-pawn. Also worth considering is 15.♖b1, in the same spirit as the 14...♘d7-line above.

15...e5

15...exd5 would allow White a pleasant choice between 16.exd5 and 16.cxd5.

16.♗g5!

It is important for White to provoke ...h7-h6, which, among other points, weakens the g6-pawn.

16...h6 17.♗d2 ♘h7

Or 17...♘d7 18.h4 f5 19.♗h3 and now 19...f4 runs into 20.♕g4! winning a pawn. This line shows the value of 16.♗g5.

18.h4 f5 19.exf5 gxf5 20.♗h3 ♕f6 21.♕h5 ♕f7 22.♕xf7† ♖xf7



23.♘d1!

A fine multipurpose move; White intends to increase the pressure against the f5-pawn with ♘e3 and ♖a3-f3, and he is also preparing to play on the queenside.

23...h5 24.b4

White has good play and retains the better chances.

B22) 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3



12...b6

Black must make his usual choice – either prevent a4-a5 (as the text move does) or simply allow it:

12...a6 13.a5

Of course this is the thematic reaction.

13...e6

Black also has two other options:

13...b5 14.axb6 ♖xb6 15.♕c2 (by analogy with the 10...a6 line, 15.♖a3 also deserves serious attention) 15...e6 This is the game Hulak – Rezan, Pula 2000, and now I spotted an interesting idea for White: 16.e5!?N ♘fe8 (or 16...dxe5 17.♗e3 ♘d7 18.♘a4 ♖b4 19.♘xc5 exd5 20.cxd5 e4 21.♗xe4 ♖xb2 22.♕c4 and it will not be easy for Black to neutralize White's passed pawn) 17.♘a4 ♖b4 18.♗d2 ♖b8 19.exd6 ♘xd6 20.♗a5 White has definite pressure.

13...♘d7 was played in Dizdar – Hickl, Austria 2002. We can also meet it with 14.♕c2 and if 14...b5 then 15.axb6 ♘xb6 16.b3± with a positional edge.

14.♗f4

This is also a thematic idea. The pressure against the d6-pawn forces Black to clarify the pawn structure in the centre.

14...exd5

Also better for White is 14...e5 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗e3±.

15.exd5 b5

If 15...♘ce8, as in Cosma – Gdanski, Budapest 1993, White should continue 16.♕c2N ♘d7 17.♗g2± with a pleasant edge.

16.axb6 ♖xb6 17.♘a4 ♖b4

This position was reached in Korchnoi – Byrne, Wijk aan Zee 1980, and now White can play calmly:

18.♕c2N±

This would leave White with a slight edge, thanks to his space advantage and bishop pair.

Finally, 12...e6 13.♗f4 exd5 14.exd5 a6 15.a5 would transpose to the 12...a6 line we have just looked at.

13.♗g5

I like the idea of provoking ...h7-h6.

13...a6 14.♗e2

Obviously this is the way to stop the ...b6-b5 advance.

14...e5

Instead 14...e6 leads to a different type of position: 15.♕d2 exd5 16.exd5± But this is favourable for White as well.

15.♔g2 ♕e8

I failed to find a way to improve Black's play: 15...h6 16.♗e3 ♘d7 17.♕d2 ♔h7 18.f4 exf4 19.gxf4 f5 20.exf5 gxf5 21.♗d3 White definitely has good chances of generating a kingside attack, as also happens in the game we are following.

16.♕c2 ♔h8 17.♗d2

White would also be better after 17.f4 ♘g8 18.f5 f6 19.♗e3 ♗h6 20.♗f2±.

17...♘g8 18.f4 exf4 19.gxf4 f5 20.♖ae1

White mobilizes the last piece.

20...♕d7 21.exf5

Now is the right moment to clarify the situation with the pawn structure.

21...gxf5 22.♔h2



White is better due to his extra space and bishop pair, which might be an important detail in the long term. White managed to increase his advantage during the next series of moves:

22...♖f6 23.♗d3 ♖bf8 24.♘e2 ♖g6 25.♘g3 ♘h6 26.♖e2±

This is Ftacnik – Gdanski, Budapest 1993.

Conclusion:

By delaying moving his e-pawn, Black keeps many transpositional possibilities, so White must be careful to avoid being tricked out of our repertoire. Although this is a respectable line for Black, following the lines I recommend should secure White an edge.



Benoni Systems



Czech Benoni

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 (3...a6) 3...e5

4.♘c3 d6 5.e4

A) 5...g6 6.♗e2 127
A1) 6...♘bd7 128
A2) 6...a6 128
A3) 6...♗g7 129
B) 5...♘bd7 6.♗d3 131
B1) 6...g6 131
B2) 6...♗e7 7.♘ge2 132
B21) 7...g6 132
B22) 7...h5 133
B23) 7...♘f8 134
B24) 7...0–0 135
C) 5...♗e7 6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2 136
C1) 7...♘a6 137
C2) 7...♘e8 137
C3) 7...♘bd7 8.♘ge2 139
C31) 8...♘e8 139
C32) 8...a6 141

B21) after 16...♖e8



17.♖dg1!N

C) note to 6...0–0



8.♘h3!N

C31) Sasikiran plays my novelty!



16.fxe5!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5

Before we get to the meat of this chapter we should briefly consider a rare move order Black may try:

3...a6

This is undeniably a legal move. I think in reply we should play naturally.

4.a4

I do not see how Black can profit from the inclusion of ...a7-a6 and a2-a4, and it even allows White an extra option if Black plans to continue in the style of the Czech Benoni.

4...e5

If 4...e6 5.g3 exd5 6.cxd5 ♗d6 7.♗g2 we get a position from the Snake Benoni (see page 102) that Black could also reach from the normal Benoni move order, so I do not see much point in this 3...a6 move order.

5.♘c3 d6

Here I really like the following example:

6.a5!?

Certainly there is nothing wrong with 6.e4 ♗e7 7.g3 transposing to our regular line against the Czech Benoni.

6...♗e7 7.e4 0–0 8.h3

This is a dangerous set-up for Black.

8...♘e8 9.♘f3 g6 10.♗h6 ♘g7 11.g4!

A key move in White's arrangement; a later ...f7-f5 will now expose Black's king. Also, White is likely to have the option of replying to ...f7-f5 by capturing twice on f5, thus creating an outpost on e4.

11...♘d7 12.♗d3 ♘f6 13.♖g1 ♔h8

This is a thematic idea in Benoni positions – the black knight will chase away White's dark-squared bishop, which helps Black to get in ...f7-f5. But in this case White can profit from the inclusion of ...a7-a6 and a2-a4.

14.♗d2 ♘g8 15.♘a4! f5

This position was reached in Fedorowicz – Illescas Cordoba, Dubai (ol) 1986. Now I really like the computer's suggestion:

16.exf5!N

In the game White continued with 16.♕e2, but then Black could have created some play with 16...fxg4! 17.hxg4 ♘f6.

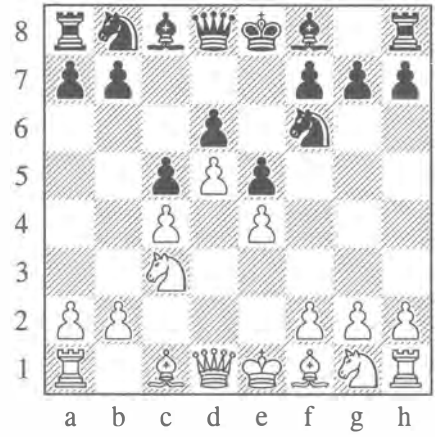
16...gxf5 17.♘b6 ♖b8 18.♗c3!

This kills the idea of ...e5-e4 and now White is ready to take on f5. For example:

18...♘f6 19.gxf5 ♘fh5 20.♘xc8 ♖xc8 21.♕c2 ♘f4 22.♗e4±

White is solidly in control.

4.♘c3 d6 5.e4



This is the Czech Benoni. Nowadays this opening is rather a rare guest at grandmaster level, though there are a few strong players, such as Nisipeanu and Marin, who opt for this opening quite often. The normal move now is 5...♗e7, so we will save that for last.

The variations worth looking at are: **A) 5...g6**, **B) 5...♘bd7** and **C) 5...♗e7**.

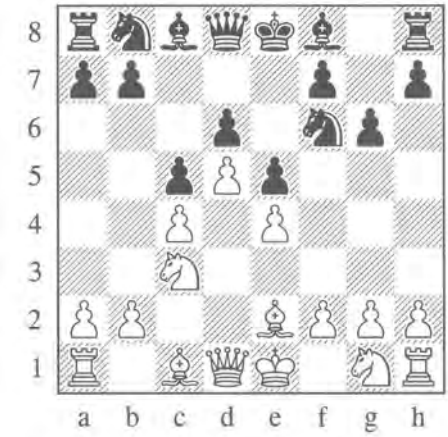
A) 5...g6

This may be heading towards a King's Indian with the inclusion of ...c7-c5. In fact this appears to be an inferior version for Black, as White has plenty of time and can choose between many arrangements of his pieces.

6.♗e2

I am confident this is the most flexible move.

Obviously White is keeping the option of pushing his kingside pawns.



At this point Black's options are: **A1) 6...♘bd7**, **A2) 6...a6** and **A3) 6...♗g7**.

A1) 6...♘bd7 7.♗g5 ♗e7

7...a6 8.a4 ♗e7

If 8...♗g7 then White can start to advance his kingside pawns with 9.g4, when Black would face a strong attack if he castled short.

9.♗d2!

We will see this idea again in the main line. In the main line the bishop goes to e3 instead of d2, but the general point is the same: Black has been lured into placing his bishop on e7, despite having played ...g7-g6.

9...0–0 10.♗h6 ♖e8 11.g4!

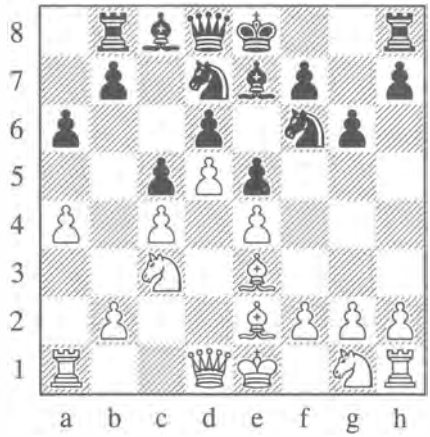
Black was under severe pressure in Psakhis – Mestel, Graz 1981.

Black is ready to meet 8.♘f3 with 8...♘h5, either exchanging dark-squared bishops or bringing the knight to f4.

8.♗e3!

A very strong reaction, as now Black has a mixed-up version of a normal Czech Benoni and a King's Indian.

8...a6 9.a4 ♖b8



This position was reached in Speelman – Zilberman, London 1991. Black once again uses a waiting strategy, but I do not see any reason for White to refrain from the most natural move:

10.♘f3N

Now I have examined the following variations:

10...0–0

Instead 10...♘g4 11.♗d2 h5 12.h3 ♘gf6 13.0–0 does not make much sense for Black, as his kingside has been weakened by ...h7-h5.

11.♗h6!

Preventing a possible ...♘e8-g7 manoeuvre, which might justify Black's set-up. For example, 11.♘d2 ♘e8 should be fine for Black.

11...♖e8 12.♘d2 ♗f8 13.♗e3!

Of course there is no point for White swapping dark-squared bishops.

13...♗g7 14.g4!±

White's extra space gives him the more pleasant position.

A2) 6...a6 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗e3



8...♗g7

8...h5

This is quite thematic in such positions.

9.♘f3 h4

This is too bold; probably Black forgot about White's next move.

Obviously Black should prefer 9...♗h6, although after 10.♗xh6 ♖xh6 11.♕d2 ♖h8 12.♘g5 White is clearly better, as Black has lost the right to castle.

10.♗g5 ♗e7?

Black simply loses a pawn. Better was 10...h3 even though after 11.g3 Black's h-pawn is rather weak.

11.♗xh4 ♗g4 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘d2±

White was a healthy pawn up in Kramnik – Piket, Zurich 2001.

9.h3

I like this natural move, taking control of the g4-square.

9...♘bd7

Or 9...0–0 10.♕d2 ♔h7 (10...h5 11.♘f3 is favourable for White, as it will hardly be possible for Black to carry out the ...f7-f5 advance. For example, 11...♘h7 12.g4! with the following point: 12...hxg4 13.hxg4 ♗xg4? 14.♖xh7! ♔xh7 15.♘g5† And White wins.) 11.g4± White had a good version of the King's Indian in Raedeker – Rotstein, Halle 2007.

10.♕d2 ♖b8

This position arose in D'Israel – Marques, Sao Paulo 2004, and here I would suggest:

11.♘f3 h5

Black cannot carry out the ...b7-b5 advance by means of 11...♕a5 12.0–0 b5, as it runs into 13.♘xb5! and White wins material.

12.♘g5 0–0 13.g4 h4 14.a3±



According to my understanding of the King's Indian, White should be better, as he has managed to block Black's play on the kingside, while he can easily develop his own play on the queenside.

A3) 6...♗g7

Sometimes Black prefers a waiting strategy, and tries to play some useful moves. To tell the truth, I do not really understand this plan. Let's have a quick look at possible developments.

7.h4!

This is the difference compared to a normal King's Indian: White uses the fact that the centre is blocked to clarify the situation on the kingside.

7...h5

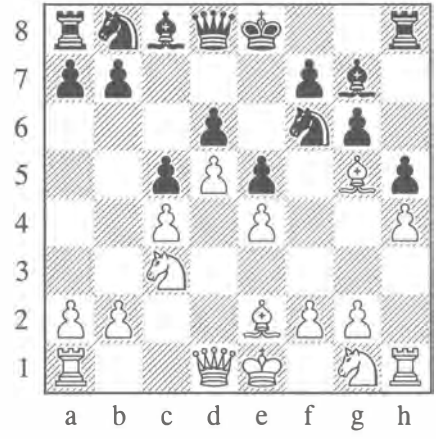
The only reliable continuation, as Black cannot allow White to play h4-h5. Let's see a couple of examples of what happens if Black is careless:

7...h6 8.h5 g5 9.g4 leads to a strategically difficult position for Black, as he lacks his normal play on the kingside, while White has a free hand for a queenside assault. The weakness of the f5-square was also significant in Atalik – Schorr, Boston 2001.

After 7...0–0 8.h5 ♘a6 9.♗e3 ♘c7 10.g4± White developed a dangerous offensive on the kingside in Akobian – Bachin, Istanbul 1998.

8.♗g5

In general I believe this position is favourable for White, as he has managed to provoke a pawn structure on the kingside that makes it almost impossible for Black to execute the ...f7-f5 advance, due to the weakness of the h5-pawn.



8...♘bd7

In my opinion, it would not make much sense for Black to swap dark-squared bishops in this specific situation:

8...♗h6 9.♗xh6 ♖xh6 10.♕d2 ♖h8

Black can no longer castle and will need to spend two more tempos securing his king with ...♔e8-f8-g7. Now I believe White should play the simple:

11.0–0–0

Instead of 11.♘h3 ♗xh3! 12.♖xh3 a6 13.a3 ♘bd7 14.b4 ♔f8 when Black had a fairly stable position in Iashvili – Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 1998.

11...♘bd7 12.♘f3

Followed by ♘g5, or ♘e1-d3 and an f2-f4 advance, either at once or after the preparatory move g2-g3. White clearly has the better chances.

9.♕d2 a6 10.f3

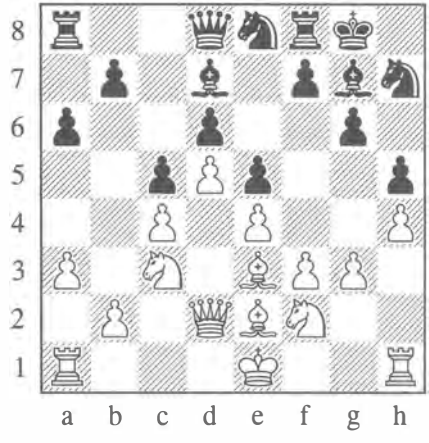
White intends to arrange his pieces in Sämisch-style. I would also consider the set-up with 10.♗d3 followed by ♘ge2.

10...♘f8 11.♘h3 ♘8h7 12.♗e3

Black's set-up looks very strange to me with his clearly misplaced knight on h7. No wonder White was clearly better in the following example.

12...♗d7 13.♘f2 0–0 14.g3 ♘e8 15.a3!?

White plays flexibly to retain the option of castling queenside, but 15.g4!? also deserves serious attention.



15...b5?

A strange pawn sacrifice. Stronger was

15...f5, although White is still better after 16.exf5 gxf5 17.f4! and the weakness of the h5-pawn starts to tell.

16.cxb5 axb5 17.♘xb5

Black was a pawn down with no compensation in Dorfman – Spielmann, Gonfreville 2006.

B) 5...♘bd7

This is a modern interpretation of Black's system; Black waits to see White's set-up before choosing between fianchettoing and ...♗e7.



6.♗d3

After deeply investigating this line I came to the conclusion that the text is White's most promising set-up.

The fianchetto set-up (which looks quite promising after 5...♗e7) does not work so well here, as Black can still develop his bishop to g7. For example:

6.g3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3

There is also 8.♘ge2 0–0 9.0–0, but after 9...♘e8 Black easily carries out the thematic ...f7-f5 advance, while 10.f4 f5∞ is already not so clear, because Black's dark-squared bishop is much more active on g7 than it would be on e7.

8...0–0 9.0–0 ♘e8 10.♗e3 ♘c7!

It would be premature to play 10...f5 in view of 11.exf5 gxf5 12.♘g5! and White's knight comes to e6.

11.♘e1 f5 12.♘d3 ♘f6

Black was all right in Hort – Tringov, Vinkovci 1976.

At this point we have to take the following possibilities into account: **B1) 6...g6** and **B2) 6...♗e7**.

B1) 6...g6

Now the following set-up looks good for White:

7.♗g5 ♗g7 8.f3

White gains a favourable version of a Sämisch-type position, as Black lacks counterplay on the queenside. The following two examples clearly show Black's problems.

8...a6 9.♘ge2 h6

Instead Petursson – Bjarnason, Reykjavik 1989, went 9...♕c7 10.a4 h6 11.♗e3 h5 12.♕d2 b6.

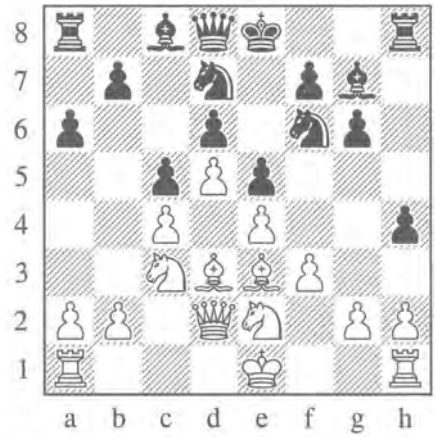
Now I believe White should have played the tricky 13.♘d1!?N±. White's knight is heading to f2, where it might help White to start an offensive (with g2-g4) if Black castles short, while the second knight will go to c3. White also keeps the option of castling long. In my opinion, White is slightly better and Black does not have serious play.

10.♗e3 h5 11.♕d2

It is important to prevent Black's idea of ...♗h6.

11...h4

Otherwise White would play h2-h4 himself.



12.♗g5!

Now Black's h-pawn becomes a weakness.

12...♕c7 13.a4 ♘h5

An understandable try to complicate the game, as White is clearly better after 13...h3 14.g4!.

14.g3

White has no intention of giving up his dark-squared bishop, although after 14.♗xh4 ♘f4 15.♘xf4 ♖xh4 16.g3 ♖h8 17.♘g2 it is not clear whether Black has sufficient compensation.

14...h3

This position occurred in Calvo Minguez – Diez del Corral, Montilla 1976, and now I believe White should have played:

15.♘d1!?N

Followed by ♘f2 and, at some point, ♘g1 and ♗f1. Black's h3-pawn should fall in the long run.

B2) 6...♗e7 7.♘ge2

Now Black has a choice. We will examine four different moves, **B21) 7...g6**, **B22) 7...h5**, **B23) 7...♘f8** and **B24) 7...0–0**.

B21) 7...g6



8.f3 ♘h5

Black has twice tried 8...h5. In both games White continued developing his pieces with 9.♗e3, which allowed Black to gain space on the kingside with ...h5-h4. Instead it is important to prevent Black from gaining space for his pieces by playing 9.h4!. We will examine this kind of position in line B22 (7...h5).

9.♗e3 ♗g5

Black executes his main idea of trading dark-squared bishops, but remains with a somewhat passive position. The following encounter proves that the position is much easier to play with White.

10.♕d2 ♗xe3 11.♕xe3 a6 12.h4

White could also choose a very different strategy: 12.0–0 ♕f6 13.g3 0–0 14.♖ab1 Beginning to play on the queenside; White's chances are also better in this case.

12...♕f6

White was threatening 13.g4.

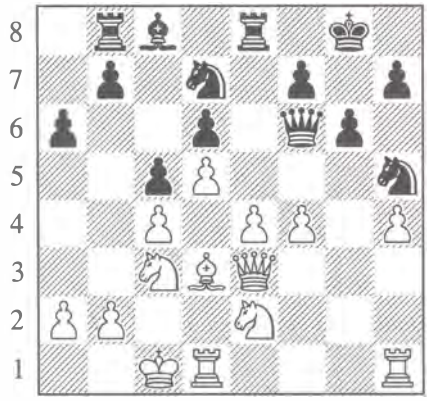
13.g3 0–0 14.0–0–0 ♖b8 15.f4! exf4

Black was afraid of 16.f5 followed by the advance of the g-pawn.

16.gxf4 ♖e8

Now in the game Harikrishna – Sahu, New Delhi 2001, White rushed the thematic sacrifice in the centre: 17.e5 dxe5 18.♘e4 ♕e7 19.f5 White eventually won a nice game, but I have failed to find anything special for White after the principled 19...gxf5!.

I believe he should instead have played the improving move:



17.♖dg1!N

With two illustrative lines:

17...♕e7

Or if 17...♔h8 then 18.e5 dxe5 19.f5, as this is now much stronger and allows White to develop a dangerous initiative. For example: 19...gxf5 20.♗xf5! ♕xf5 21.♖g5 ♕f6 22.♖xh5 White's attack is extremely dangerous.

18.♘g3 ♘df6 19.♘xh5 ♘xh5 20.♕f3 ♔h8

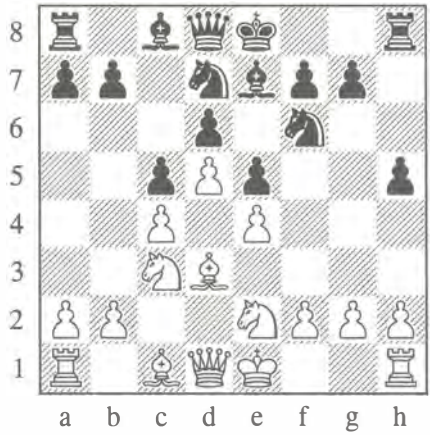
21.♕xh5 was threatened.

21.e5!

White has the initiative.

B22) 7...h5

As usual, Black is planning to grab more space on the kingside with ...h5-h4, and he is also trying to make it dangerous for White to castle short.



8.h4!

As I explained above, it is essential for White to prevent Black gaining more space on the kingside. The following is a good example of what can happen if White fails to play the prophylactic 8.h4: 8.f3 h4 9.♗e3 g6 10.♕d2 ♔f8 11.0–0–0 ♔g7 12.g3 a6 13.♖hg1 b5 With double-edged play, Markos – Bezold, Pulvermuehle 2006.

8...a6

The game Hecht – Van den Berg, Italy 2004, continued: 8...g6 9.g3 ♔f8 10.f3 ♔g7 11.♗e3 ♘e8 12.♕d2 ♘c7 13.♔f1 (I do not see any problems with 13.0–0, but the text does not change much) 13...♘f6 14.♔g2 ♗d7 15.♖ab1 ♕e8 16.b4 White was better; Black's position is very solid, but he has no active plan.

9.f3 g6 10.♗e3 ♔f8 11.♕d2 ♔g7 12.g3

Just in case, White defends the h4-pawn.

12...♘e8

This position was reached in Iskusnyh – Onoprienko, Moscow 2006. In my opinion White could have started to play actively on the queenside with 13.a3 followed by b2-b4 and so on. Just as in the previous example,

White has the better chances thanks to his space advantage.

B23) 7...♘f8

Black's knight is heading for g6, where it might jump to either the f4- or h4-squares.

8.♘g3

I believe this is the best reaction. Now Black has a tough choice, either to allow White's knight to f5, or to play ...g7-g6, which would restrict White's knight but also take away the g6-square from Black's own knight.



8...g6

8...♘g6 9.♘f5

After these moves Black's position looks dubious to me. For example:

9...0–0

Instead 9...♗xf5 10.exf5 ♘f4 does not work in view of 11.♗f1! and Black has serious problems with his f4-knight. J. Myers – Pizzato, Australia (ch) 1995, continued: 11...g6 12.g3 ♘4h5 13.g4! ♘f4 14.♗xf4 exf4 15.g5 ♘h5 16.f6± White was already winning material.

10.g3!

Now Black's knight is restricted, while White's knight on f5 is really annoying for Black. White's advantage is obvious.

10...♖e8 11.♕f3 ♗f8

Or 11...h6 12.h4 ♗f8 13.♗e3 a6 14.a3 ♘h7 15.b4 b6 16.♖b1 and Black was struggling on both sides of the board in Atalik – Abdul Wahab, Moscow (ol) 1994.

12.♗g5 ♗xf5 13.♕xf5 ♗e7 14.h4 h6 15.♗d2

White had a pleasant positional advantage in Hauchard – Chevallier, France 1992.

9.h4

As ever, I like this move, as it prevents Black from grabbing space on the kingside with ...h5-h4, as happened in the following game: 9.f3 h5 10.♗e3 h4 11.♘ge2 ♘h5 12.♕d2 ♘h7 13.g3 ♘g5 Black found some activity in Leitao – Pelikian, Sao Paulo 1995.

9...h5

I also examined 9...♘g4 10.h5 ♗g5. Black executes his main positional idea, but the price is too high, as his position is very passive, especially his knight on f8 (there is even less point to 10...♗h4 after 11.♘ce2!). 11.♗xg5 ♕xg5 12.♘b5 ♕d8 13.f3 ♘f6 14.♕d2 (White gains nothing from 14.♕a4 as Black has 14...♗d7) 14...a6 15.♘c3 White obviously has the initiative.

10.♘f1

Black was threatening to attack the h4-pawn by moving his knight from f6.

10...♘g4 11.f3 ♘h6 12.g3 a6

It is very important that Black cannot play 12...f5 because of 13.♗xh6! ♖xh6 14.exf5 gxf5 (or 14...♗xf5 15.♘e3 leaves White with a clear positional advantage, thanks to his total control of the e4-square) 15.♕c2 f4 16.0–0–0 and the game opening up is clearly in White's favour, as Black's king is still stuck in the centre.

13.♕c2 ♗d7 14.a3

White has stopped the ...f7-f5 advance and now starts his own play on the queenside.

14...♕b8

This position is from the game Szabo – Ristoja, Helsinki 1975. It is not clear why White refrained from the following natural move.



15.b4!?N

I checked the following line:

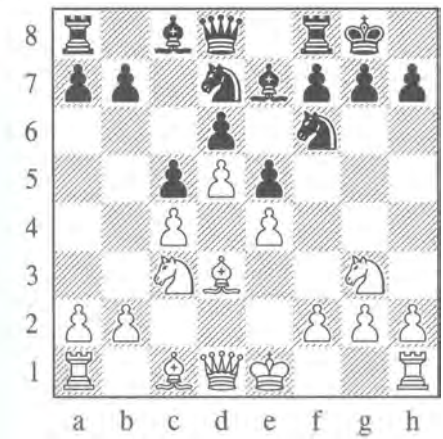
15...b5 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.♖b1 b4 18.axb4 cxb4 19.♗e3! ♕c7 20.♘a2 a5 21.c5

With a clear advantage for White.

B24) 7...0–0

This is actually Black's main choice according to current theory.

8.♘g3



8...♘e8

Again, this is clearly Black's first choice according to theory and the database, but perhaps objectively it is not the best continuation. Let's check other options:

8...g6 has only been tried once, no doubt because players are concerned about 9.♗h6 ♖e8 10.h4! and after 10...♗f8 11.♗xf8 (11.♗e3 would allow 11...h5, which slows White's kingside play) 11...♘xf8 12.h5 White has good prospects of developing a dangerous offensive.

8...♖e8 seems somewhat passive to me. 9.♘f5 ♗f8 10.♗g5 Now Black has to give up his light-squared bishop. 10...♘b6 11.♕f3 ♗xf5 12.♕xf5± White has a pleasant edge thanks to his bishop pair, which will be an important long-term factor, J. Cohen – V. Van Riemsdijk, Guarapuava 1992.

9.♘f5

Another possibility is 9.h4 when play might continue: 9...g6 10.h5 ♗g5 11.♗xg5 ♕xg5 12.♕d2 ♕xd2† 13.♔xd2± White has a small but stable edge, though Black's position remains solid, Katov – Janev, Razgrad 2006

9...♗g5 10.♗xg5 ♕xg5 11.g3!?

Even stronger would have been: 11.h4! ♕d8 (obviously Black cannot take the g2-pawn, as after 11...♕xg2 12.♘g3! he is helpless against the idea of ♗f1 winning the queen) 12.g4 Black's position looks very unpleasant.

11...a6 12.♕e2 ♕d8 13.0–0–0! b5

Black tries desperately to complicate matters; after 13...g6 14.♘e3 ♘df6 15.f4 White's attack plays itself.

14.cxb5 ♘b6 15.bxa6 ♘c7

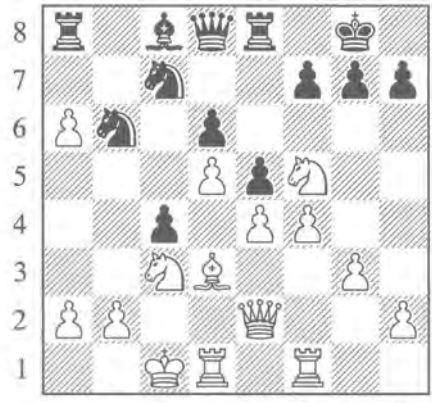
It looks as if Black will gain counter-chances on the queenside, but in fact White keeps the advantage with a series of strong moves.

16.f4 ♖e8

White is also clearly better after 16...♘xa6 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.♗xa6! ♗xa6 19.♕g4 g6 20.d6!.

17.♖hf1! c4

The best chance. White would be much better after 17...♗xf5 18.exf5 exf4 19.♘e4!±.

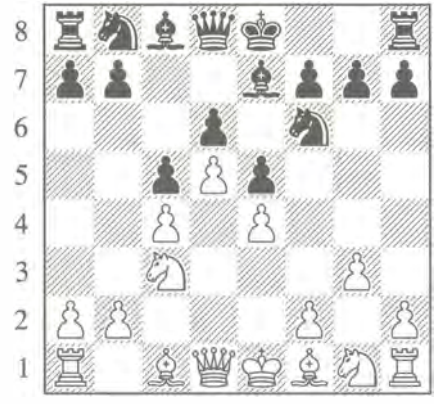


18.♗xc4! ♘xc4 19.♕xc4 ♗xa6 20.♕b4 ♗xf1 21.♖xf1

White had a serious advantage in the game Al Sayed – Avrukh, Biel 2008.

C) 5...♗e7 6.g3

This is considered to be the best set-up for White against the Czech Benoni.



6...0–0

Other options are not so relevant, as they would transpose to the 6...0–0 line, with the possible exception of:

6...h5

I believe this should be met with:

7.h4

Now the main continuation is:

7...♘a6

The alternative 7...♘bd7 is passive, and the following example looks quite convincing to me: 8.♘h3 g6 9.f3 (there is also nothing wrong with the immediate 9.♘g5) 9...♘h7 10.♗e3 a6 11.♕d2 ♘df6 12.♗e2 ♗d7 13.♘g5 (13.♘f2!?) 13...0–0 14.0–0 ♘xg5 And here, instead of recapturing with the bishop, as happened in Browne – Finegold, Las Vegas 1994, White could have played: 15.hxg5 ♘h7 16.f4 Now if 16...f6 White reacts with 17.gxf6 ♗xf6 18.f5, seizing the initiative.

After the text move White has tried all sorts of replies, but no one has opted for the following natural move:



8.♘h3!N

This looks very strong. White's knight is heading for g5, underlining the weak point of Black's 6th move. I examined the following line:

8...♘c7 9.♘g5 g6 10.♗g2 0–0 11.0–0

In my opinion the inclusion of h2-h4 and ...h7-h5 is favourable for White, and play might continue:

11...♘h7 12.f4! ♘xg5 13.hxg5 ♗g4 14.♕d3
White is better.

7.♗g2

7...a6 is not as relevant because after 8.a4 the game would transpose to other lines. So it's all about knight moves: **C1) 7...♘a6**, **C2) 7...♘e8** and **C3) 7...♘bd7**.

C1) 7...♘a6

This seems very passive, although it is thematic in many Benoni-style openings.

8.♘ge2 ♘c7 9.0–0 ♖b8

The following alternative is an example from my own praxis:
9...a6 10.a4 b6
10...♖b8 11.a5 b5 12.axb6 ♖xb6 transposes to the 9...♖b8 main line.
11.f4 ♘d7 12.♕d3 ♖b8 13.♗d2 ♗f6 14.♖a2 ♖e8 15.b3
Black lacks counterplay and so decides to open the centre, but this does not help much.
15...exf4 16.gxf4 ♘f8 17.a5 b5 18.e5!
A thematic pawn sacrifice.
18...dxe5 19.f5
Next will come ♘e4 with complete domination, Avrukh – Veinger, Israel 1999.

10.a4 a6

Black can transfer his knight to the weakened b4-square by means of ...♘a6-b4, but it will be out of play there. 10...♘a6 11.f4 ♘d7 12.♗e3 ♘b4 13.♕d2 ♗f6 14.f5 White has a clear plan of a kingside offensive, while Black is doomed to passivity, Sonntag – F. Braga, Cadiz 1991.

11.a5 b5 12.axb6 ♖xb6

Black has executed his idea, but he is far from getting real counterplay on the queenside. The following two examples are fine demonstrations of White's intentions:

13.♘a4



13...♖b7

Another game went: 13...♖b4 14.b3 ♗g4 15.f3 ♗h5 16.♗d2 ♖b7 17.♕c2 ♘d7 18.♗h3 h6 19.♗a5 ♗g5 20.♕d3 (covering the e3-square) 20...♖e8 21.♖fb1 ♗g6 22.b4!± White was clearly better in A. Maric – S. Maksimovic, Cetinje 1993.

14.♗d2

Black's main problem is the passively placed knight on c7.

14...♗d7 15.♗c3

Black should watch out for possible sacrifices in the centre, such as ♘xc5 or ♗xe5.

15...♘fe8 16.f4 f6 17.♕d2 ♕b8 18.f5 ♖f7 19.h4

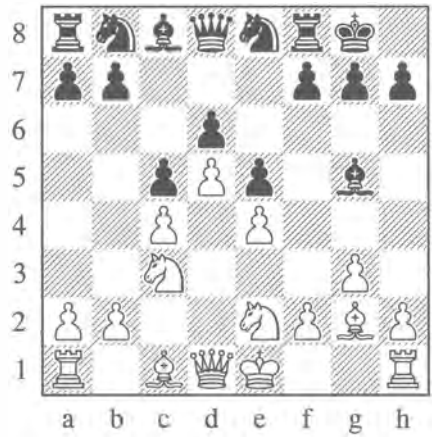
Black is clearly worse, Gulko – Mar, San Mateo (rapid) 1989.

C2) 7...♘e8 8.♘ge2 ♗g5

In addition to the text move, we need to know how to deal with two other moves:

8...g6 9.♗h6 ♘g7 10.♕d2 and now after 10...♘d7 (or 10...f5 11.0–0 ♘d7 12.f4) 11.0–0, play would transpose to the 7...♘bd7 line.

8...f5 allows White to maintain control over the e4-square: 9.exf5 ♗xf5 10.0–0 ♘d7 11.♘e4 h6 12.♘2c3± White had a pleasant edge in Benko – Zwaig, Havana 1966.



9.f4

The critical reaction.

9...exf4 10.gxf4 ♗h4†

Otherwise it is not clear why Black released the central tension. For example, after 10...♗f6 11.0–0 ♘d7 12.♗e3 White had a pleasant edge in Klimov – Gubajdullin, Moscow 2008.

11.♘g3 f5

The point of Black's previous play. Instead after 11...♘d7 12.0–0 g6 13.♗e3 b6 14.♕d2 White is simply better, thanks to his superiority in the centre, Hoang Thanh Trang – Csom, Budapest 1997.

12.0–0!

It is important to know that the apparently attractive pawn advance is very unclear:

12.e5

Black continues:

12...dxe5 13.fxe5 ♘d7!

Of course 13...f4? would be a serious mistake, as it allows White to seize a powerful initiative after 14.0–0 fxg3 15.♖xf8† ♔xf8 16.hxg3 ♗e7. The following encounter is a good example of White's attack: 17.d6 (17.♗e3 ♔g8 18.♘e4 is also good enough) 17...♘xd6 18.exd6 ♕xd6 19.♘d5 ♘c6 20.♗f4 ♕d8 21.♕h5 Black could not withstand White's offensive in S. Schneider – Koehn, Hallsberg 1993.

14.e6

14.♗f4 obviously runs into 14...g5!∓.

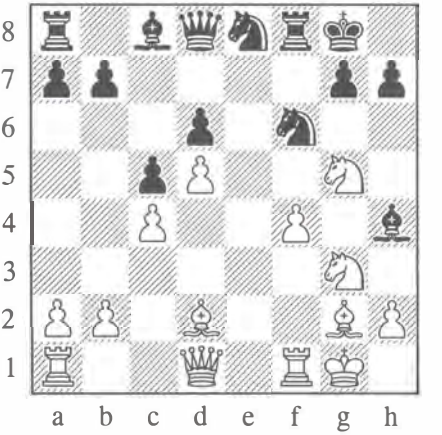
14...f4 15.exd7 fxg3

With wild complications, Von Herman – Urban, Budapest 1991.

12...fxe4 13.♘cxe4

I believe this complex position is highly favourable for White, as his pieces are much better mobilized. The following is merely an illustrative line.

13...♘d7 14.♗d2 ♘df6 15.♘g5!



15...♘c7

15...♗g4 16.♕c2 ♕d7?

A serious mistake, but even after the best try 16...♘c7 White enjoys a nice plus after: 17.♘f5 ♗xf5 18.♕xf5 ♗xg5 19.fxg5 ♘d7 20.♕e4 ♘e5 21.♗c3! With the following point: 21...♕xg5 22.♗xe5 dxe5 23.d6 ♘e6 24.♕d5 ♕g6 25.♖xf8† ♖xf8 26.d7 ♔h8 27.♕xe5 White has a decisive advantage.

17.♘e6! ♗xe6?

Another mistake, but even after 17...♗xg3

18.♘xf8 ♗xh2† 19.♔xh2 ♔xf8 20.♖ae1 White's material advantage should decide the issue.

18.dxe6 ♕xe6 19.♘f5+–

Black lost his bishop in Beckemeier – Ruehrig, Germany 1986.

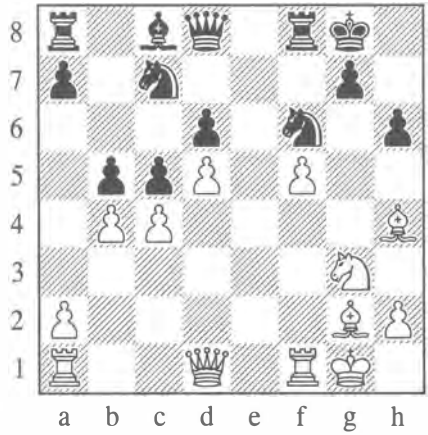
16.f5

Instead 16.♕c2 is less convincing as it allows Black to play 16...h6 17.♘f3 ♘g4.

16...♗xg5

Black refrains from winning a pawn with 16...♘fxd5 and indeed after 17.♕g4 ♗xg5 18.♗xg5 ♘f6 19.♕f4 White has powerful compensation as he dominates the board.

17.♗xg5 h6 18.♗h4 b5 19.b4!?



A very strong positional pawn sacrifice.

19...cxb4 20.c5 dxc5?

This is a serious mistake. Correct was 20...♘ce8, although after 21.c6 ♕b6† 22.♔h1 White's passed pawn secures him much better chances.

21.d6 ♖b8 22.dxc7 ♕xc7 23.♘h5!

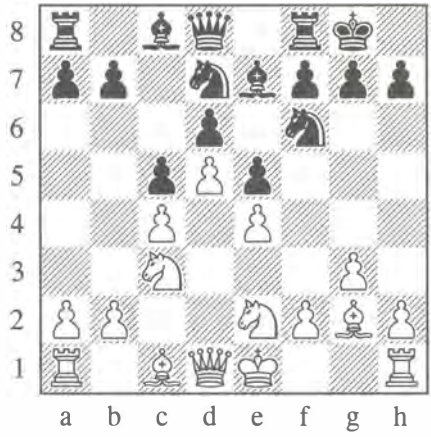
White was winning in Crouch – C. Cobb, Newport 2000.

C3) 7...♘bd7

This is considered to be Black's main option.

8.♘ge2

This is White's most ambitious set-up against the Czech Benoni. White avoids blocking the f-pawn and intends to play the active f2-f4 very soon.



At this point we need to investigate the direct approach with **C31) 8...♘e8** and the attempt to be subtle with **C32) 8...a6**.

C31) 8...♘e8 9.0–0 g6

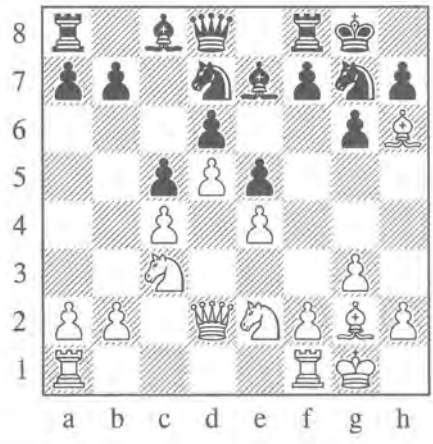
Now White should take the opportunity to land his bishop on h6 with tempo. Instead 9...a6 10.a4 does not change much.

10.♗h6

Much less ambitious is 10.♗e3. To understand the difference let's follow a recent game: 10...♘g7 11.♕d2 f5 12.f4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘f5! Of course this would be impossible with White's bishop on h6. 14.♗f2 exf4 15.♘xf4 ♘e5 16.b3 ♗g5 17.♘xg5 ♕xg5 Black had a reasonable position in Roselli Mailhe – Ermenkov, Dresden 2008.

10...♘g7 11.♕d2

Another main line is 11.f4 exf4 12.gxf4 f5 13.exf5 ♖xf5, but in my opinion this is quite reliable for Black.



11...♘f6

Black continues regrouping. Now his plan is to play ...♔h8 and ...♘g8 and only then to follow up with ...f5.

The immediate pawn break is considered to be inferior:

11...f5 12.f4 ♖f7 13.♖ae1

It is difficult for Black to move.

13...a6 14.a4 ♖b8

This position is from the game Krueger – Werchan, Bad Wildbad 1997, and now instead of the inaccurate 15.♘c1, which allows Black to obtain a normal game after 15...exf4! 16.♗xf4 g5 17.♗e3 ♘e5 18.b3 ♗f6, White should continue increasing the pressure on Black's position by:



15.♗h3!?N ♗f6 16.♕c2

White has the better chances.

12.h3

Obviously White has to defend against ...♘g4.

12...♔h8

White cannot play the immediate 13.f4 in view of 13...♘g8 when he has to give up his dark-squared bishop, so instead he waits for Black to play ...♘g8, meanwhile making a useful move.

13.♖ae1 ♘g8 14.♗e3 f5 15.f4

Now both sides have concluded their initial plans. The tension in the centre is favourable for White, as after opening up the position we can see the difference between White's well-mobilized forces and Black's undeveloped queenside. The following is a good example:

15...♗f6



16.fxe5!

White's pieces are perfectly mobilized and there is no point waiting any longer with 16.♔h2, as happened in a couple of games that reached this position. I found the text move as a novelty, but then Sasikiran played it in December 2009!

16...♗xe5 17.♗f4! ♗f6

The only playable answer. See for yourself:

17...♖e8 18.exf5 ♘xf5 (18...♗xf5 obviously runs into 19.g4!±) 19.♘e4 White has a huge advantage, as Black is almost paralysed.

17...♗d7 18.♗xe5 dxe5 19.exf5 gxf5 (19...♘xf5 leaves Black with a weak e5-pawn and after 20.♘e4 White's advantage is obvious) 20.♘c1 e4 21.g4! Black cannot hold his central pawns, so White is clearly better.

The game Sasikiran – Satyapragyan, India 2009, continued: 17...♗xf4? 18.♘xf4 And Black did not last long: 18...fxe4 19.g4 e3 20.♖xe3 ♗d7 21.♘e4 ♕c7 22.♖ef3 ♖fe8 23.♘g5 ♖e7 24.♘f7† ♖xf7 25.♘xg6† hxg6 26.♖xf7 1–0

18.exf5 gxf5!

This is the only way Black can stay in the game. The other options lead to critical positions for Black, for example:

18...g5 19.♗e3 ♘xf5 20.♗f2 ♗e5 21.g4 ♘h4 22.♗g3! Black's position is very difficult due to his undeveloped queenside. 22...♖xf1† 23.♖xf1 ♘g6 24.♘e4 h6 25.♗xe5† ♘xe5 26.♘c1 Followed by ♘d3 with a decisive positional advantage.

After 18...♘xf5 19.♘e4± White threatens g3-g4 and the d6-pawn is falling.

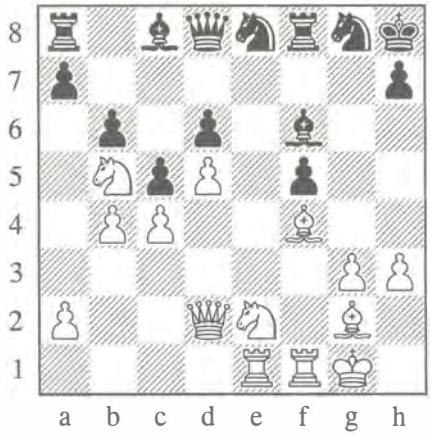
19.b4

White's idea is to weaken Black on the h1-a8 diagonal to increase the impact of ♘e2-f4-e6.

19...b6

Obviously inferior is 19...cxb4 20.♘b5 followed by ♕xb4 with a clear edge.

20.♘b5 ♘e8



21.♗e3

Vacating the f4-square for the knight and thus preparing the manoeuvre ♘f4-e6.

21...a6 22.♘bc3

I believe White's chances are better. The following line is an example of how play might continue.

22...♖a7 23.♘f4 ♘g7 24.♗f2 ♖e8 25.♘a4 ♖ae7 26.♖b1

White has serious pressure.

C32) 8...a6

I decided to make this move my main line. Usually Black's main idea is connected with the ...f7-f5 advance. This can be achieved with the manoeuvre ...♘e8, ...g7-g6 and if necessary ...♘g7. On the other hand, White will always be ready to meet Black's advance with f2-f4, trying to open up the game, with the hope that the difference in activity of the minor pieces will tell. So let's have a look at what happens if Black starts to execute his main plan at once.

9.a4

I believe there is no point in allowing Black to play a Benko-style pawn sacrifice after 9.0–0 b5 10.cxb5 ♕a5⇄.



9...b6

Once again, Black can go for his thematic idea:

9...♘e8 10.0–0 g6 11.♗h6 ♘g7 12.♕d2 ♘f6 13.h3 ♔h8 14.♖ae1 ♘g8 15.♗e3 f5 16.f4 ♗f6

This position was reached in Ekstroem – V. Atlas, Switzerland 2008. In fact we have the same position as in the 8...♘e8 line except with the inclusion of ...a7-a6 and a2-a4.

17.fxe5 ♗xe5 18.♗f4

The idea from the 8...♘e8-line.

18...♗f6 19.exf5 gxf5

Since in this line Black has played ...a7-a6, White obviously cannot play ♘b5 as he did in the previous line, but instead the knight has a new option:



20.a5!

With the idea of ♘a4-b6 and, if necessary, b2-b4; White has a pleasant edge.

20...♘h5 21.♘a4 ♖b8 22.♘b6 ♘xf4 23.♘xf4

With a clear advantage.

10.0–0 ♘e8

Now this is trickier. Black makes a useful move and does not allow White's bishop to h6. White now has two possibilities: either to play f2-f4 straightaway or wait for the h6-square to become available for his bishop by making some other useful moves. After studying the position I have come to the conclusion that the second strategy is more dangerous for Black.

11.♔h1

A generally useful move.

Of course I also investigated the immediate pawn break:

11.f4

But it seems to me that Black now gets some play.

11...exf4 12.gxf4 ♖a7

Removing the rook from the diagonal and thus preventing a possible e4-e5 idea.

13.♗e3 ♗f6

Now Black has an easy plan of ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...f7-f5. I could not find anything special for White here, for example:

14.♕d2 g6 15.♘c1 ♗g7 16.♘d3 f5! 17.exf5 gxf5

Black has decent play.



11...♖a7

Actually this move has never been played in tournament praxis, but it was recommended by Mihail Marin, a great specialist in the Czech Benoni with Black, in his comments to the Kasimdzhanov – Nisipeanu game.

Once again we are obliged to check the alternatives:

11...g6 12.♗h6 ♘g7 13.f4! White can exploit the slight weakening of the h1-a8 diagonal. (Certainly the text is more principled than "normal" play with 13.♕d2.) 13...exf4 14.gxf4 Black cannot play the desirable 14...f5 in view of 15.e5! and White's central pawn is untouchable because of 16.d6.

11...♖b8 was tested in the old game Averbakh – Liublinsky, Moscow 1952. White can react in the same way as in our main line with 12.♕d3.

12.♕d3

Another useful move, as we will see later that White's queen is well-placed on d3.

I believe it would again be premature to play 12.f4 exf4 13.gxf4 ♗f6 with a reasonable game for Black, for example 14.♘g1 ♗xc3! 15.bxc3 f5. Now it seems to me Black is running out of useful moves, so he should switch to his main plan.

12...g6 13.♗h6 ♘g7 14.f4 f5

White uses the same idea if Black chooses to exchange on f4 first, before playing his ...f7-f5 break: 14...exf4 15.gxf4 f5 16.♗h3!

15.♗h3!

A very strong idea, which secures White's edge. For example:

15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 exf4 17.♗xd7 ♗xd7 18.♘xf4 ♗f5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♘e6† ♗xe6



21.dxe6±

White has a vast selection of advantages – a passed pawn, an outpost on d5, a target on d6, a safer king...

Conclusion:

The Czech Benoni leads to closed positions where White automatically gains a space advantage. Of course Black hopes to gain counterplay, generally with an ...f7-f5 break, but our standard kingside fianchetto both blunts Black's attacking hopes and offers White the chance of hitting back with f2-f4.

Chapter 12

Benoni Systems



Old Benoni

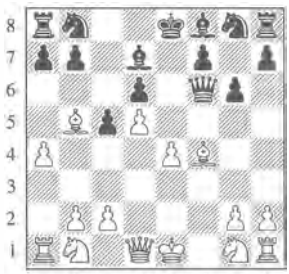
Variation Index

1.d4 c5

2.d5

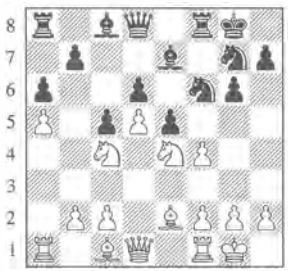
A) 2...b5 145
B) 2...f5 147
C) 2...e5 3.e4 d6 4.♗b5†!? 149
C1) 4...♗d7 5.a4! 149
C11) 5...g6 150
C12) 5...♗e7 151
C2) 4...♘d7 151
D) 2...e6 3.♘c3 154
D1) 3...♘f6 4.e4 d6 5.♗b5†!? 155
D11) 5...♘bd7?! 155
D12) 5...♗d7 156
D2) 3...d6 4.e4 158
D21) 4...exd5 5.♘xd5 ♘f6 6.♘f3 158
D211) 6...♘xd5 158
D212) 6...♗e7 160
D22) 4...a6 160
D3) 3...exd5 162

C11) after 7...♕f6



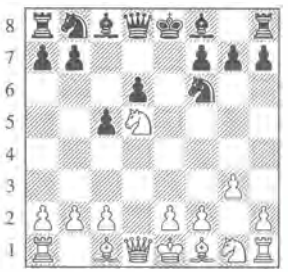
8.♘e2!N

C2) note to 5...g6



15.♘exd6!N

D3) after 5...♘f6



6.♘xf6†!N

1.d4 c5 2.d5



The initial position of what I shall call the Old Benoni lines (in contrast to the more popular Modern Benoni where of course Black starts with 1...♘f6). Obviously Black has a wide choice here. I have decided to focus on the two main continuations, 2...e5 and 2...e6. Relatively rare moves such as 2...b5 and 2...f5 will also be covered, while 2...g6 and 2...♘f6 are irrelevant, as they naturally transpose to other chapters after 3.c4.

So, our choices are: **A) 2...b5**, **B) 2...f5**, **C) 2...e5** and **D) 2...e6**.

A) 2...b5

This rather dubious concept allows White to obtain a significant superiority in the centre, so it is no wonder that this line is not popular with serious players.

3.e4 a6

The alternative is:

3...♕b6?!

But this runs into a strong reply.

4.a4!

When Black has a tough choice:

4...b4

This surrenders the c4-square, but so does the alternative 4...bxa4, which damages Black's queenside pawn structure even more. 5.♖xa4 (5.♘c3 is a nice alternative) 5...d6 6.♘c3 ♘f6 Black commits another inaccuracy (somewhat better was 6...g6 followed by 7...♗g7). 7.♘f3 g6 8.e5! The point; now Black is in serious trouble. The game Loncar – B. Radulovic, Croatia 2008, continued: 8...dxe5 9.♘xe5 ♗g7 10.♗b5† ♗d7 11.♘xd7 ♘fxd7 12.♕e2 0–0 13.0–0± Black was under strong pressure.

5.♘d2

Naturally White's knight is heading for the perfect c4-square.

5...♘f6?!

Now White gains a large advantage, but even after the more accurate 5...d6 I cannot imagine how Black will complete his development: 6.♘gf3 ♘f6 (if 6...g6 then 7.e5! is strong) 7.♗b5† ♗d7 8.♘c4 ♕c7 9.e5 dxe5 10.♘fxe5 a6 11.♗xd7† ♘bxd7 12.♘xd7 ♘xd7 13.♕f3!± Threatening 14.d6, plus ♗f4 and 0–0–0 will also quickly follow.

6.♘c4 ♕b7



7.e5! ♘g8

White's d-pawn is untouchable, as 7...♘xd5?? fails to 8.♘a5.

8.f4

White was much better in Covlea – Bogza, Bucharest 1994.

4.a4

No doubt the reader has already noted that this is White's key positional idea in this line. Black's reply is forced.

4...b4

As usual, this allows a fine outpost for White's knight on c4. The following lines demonstrate White's advantage:

5.♘d2



5...d6

We shall take Black fianchettoing his king's bishop as the main line, but we should also consider what happens if Black chooses to put the bishop on e7:

5...♘f6 6.♗d3 d6 7.♘gf3 e5 8.a5!

Another important positional decision; White not only fixes Black's pawn on a6, but also gains more space on the queenside which will help develop his play.

8...♗e7 9.h3 0–0 10.♘c4 ♗d7 11.♘b6 ♖a7 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 ♗b5 14.♗e3 ♘e8 15.c4 ♗d7 16.0–0 g6 17.♗h6 ♘g7 18.♕d2

White has a clear space advantage, so it is not surprising that Black's attempt to gain counterplay backfires:

18...f5 19.♘g5 ♗xg5 20.♗xg5 ♕e8 21.f4±

In Khenkin – Alias Ginel, Spain 2005, White opened up the position in his favour.

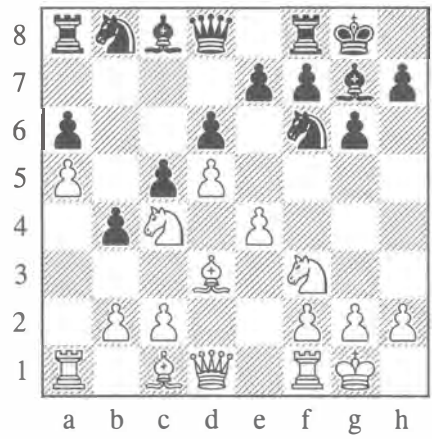
6.♘c4 g6 7.♗d3 ♗g7 8.a5

As we already know from the previous example, this is an important positional decision. In general I believe White should always be better if he manages to secure his knight on c4.

8...♘f6 9.♘f3

Slightly inaccurate is 9.h3 0–0 10.♘f3, Gritsak – Kot, Warsaw 2006, as it allows 10...e6! 11.0–0 exd5 12.exd5 ♗b7 with counterplay.

9...0–0 10.0–0



10...♘bd7

In contrast to the variation above, White is now ready to meet Black's ...e6 pawn break:

10...e6 11.♗f4! e5

Closing the centre was not Black's original intention, but the consistent follow-up runs into trouble: 11...exd5 12.exd5 ♘e8 (Black cannot play 12...♘xd5, as after 13.♗xd6 ♖e8 14.♗xg6! White wins material) 13.♖e1 ♗b7 14.♗f1 White is clearly better, as Black is tied to the defence of the d6-pawn.

12.♗d2

Followed by 13.c3 with a favourable position for White.

Relatively best would have been 10...♗g4 although after 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘bd7 13.♗f4 White has a pleasant position.

Returning to the main line, we have been following the game Link – Richter, Dortmund 2003, and now White should have chosen a calm prophylactic continuation:

11.h3

Preventing possible ideas with ...♘g4.

11...♖b8 12.♗f4

White has a pleasant edge.

B) 2...f5

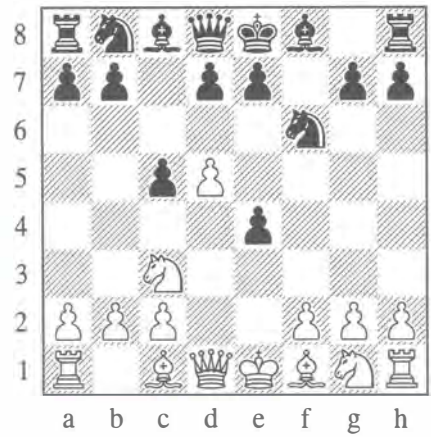
This leads to a hybrid between the Dutch and the Benoni. In British chess circles it is known as the Clarendon Court Defence, named after the block of flats in London where GM Jon Levitt, one of the line's supporters, has lived for many years. I do not rate this variation highly, but who knows, maybe I am wrong. I developed the following attractive-looking line for White.

3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e4

This seems the most principled to me and if it work well for White then I do not see any reason to refrain from this continuation.

4...fxe4

Obviously the other capture is completely wrong: 4...♘xe4? 5.♘xe4 fxe4 6.♕h5†! g6 7.♕e5 ♖g8 8.♕xe4 and White is clearly better.



5.g4!?

A tempting continuation, but White can also try 5.♘ge2 with the idea of quickly regaining the pawn with ♘e2-g3xe4.

5...e6

We have reached the main crossroads for Black. In addition to the text move, he has two other possibilities to take into consideration:

5...g6

This allows White to push away the black knight.

6.g5 ♘h5 7.♗e2 ♕b6

I also examined 7...♘g7 when White is clearly better after 8.h4 ♘f5 9.h5 ♗g7 10.♘xe4 d6 11.c3 ♘d7 12.h6! ♗f8 13.♘f3±.

This position was reached in Jpsingh – WindPower, Internet 2006. I believe White could simply grab the pawn:



8.♗xh5N gxh5 9.♕xh5† ♕g6 10.♕e2 ♗g7 11.♘xe4 d6 12.h4±

I do not see sufficient compensation for Black.

5...h6 6.♗g2 d6

6...e6 7.♘ge2 d6 8.h3 would transpose to the main line.

7.h3

The most natural move, but in my opinion the following line also deserves serious attention: 7.♘xe4 ♘xg4 8.♕e2!?N

7...e5

The alternative is 7...e6 8.♘ge2 exd5 (even worse is 8...♘bd7 9.dxe6 ♘e5 10.♘xe4 ♗xe6 11.♘f4 ♗f7 12.♘xf6† ♕xf6 13.♗xb7 when White was a healthy pawn up in Schlosser – Bischoff, Austria 1997) 9.♘xd5 ♘c6 This position was reached in Vaisser – Sarmiento Alfonso, Las Palmas 1996, and now after the simple: 10.0–0N White should be better, and the following line is plausible: 10...♗e6 11.♘ef4 ♗f7 12.♘xf6† ♕xf6 13.♘d5 ♗xd5 14.♕xd5 0–0–0 15.♗xe4 ♗e7 16.♗d2 With an advantage.

8.♘xe4

I believe this type of position is favourable for White, thanks to his control over the e4-square and Black's slightly weakened light squares on the kingside. I examined the following thematic line

8...♗e7 9.♘e2 ♘bd7

This was played in Menadue – Pugh, England 2008.



10.♘2g3N 0–0 11.0–0 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4

Also interesting is 12.♗xe4 ♘f6 13.♗d3 when White is a little better.

12...♘f6 13.♘g3 ♗d7 14.♗e3±

White has an edge.

6.dxe6

Also worth considering is 6.♗g2, when I analysed the following natural-looking line: 6...♘xd5 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.♕xd5 d6 9.♗e3 ♘c6 10.0–0–0 White will regain the pawn at a suitable moment, retaining the better chances.

6...h6!

Black's best chance. The endgame after 6...dxe6 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.g5 ♘d5 9.♗d2! is clearly favourable for White.



7.g5 hxg5 8.♗xg5

At first sight 8.♘h3 may look quite attractive, but after 8...♘c6 9.♘xg5 ♘d4! we have a very complex game.

8...♗e7 9.♘ge2 ♘c6

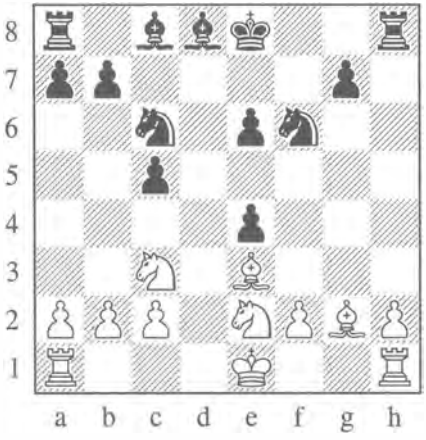
9...dxe6 is likely to transpose. After 10.♕xd8† ♗xd8 11.♗g2 ♘c6 12.♗e3 we reach a position from the main line.

9...d5 is very risky. After 10.♘f4 ♘c6 (simply bad is 10...d4 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.♘xe4 with a decisive advantage) 11.♗e2 0–0 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♕xd5 White wins material, as Black cannot play 13...♕xd5 14.♘fxd5 ♗xe6 in view of 15.♘c7!.

10.♗g2 dxe6

Black can hardly hope for serious compensation after 10...0–0 11.exd7 ♗xd7 12.♗xf6 ♖xf6 13.♘xe4±.

11.♕xd8† ♗xd8 12.♗e3!?N



This move is a slight improvement over 12.0–0–0 as played in Buturin – Trushnikov, Lvov 1996, which allows 12...e5 with the idea of ...♘d4, when the position is not entirely clear.

12...♗e7 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4±

White has a pleasant risk-free advantage, thanks to his better pawn structure.

C) 2...e5

Naturally this blockading move means that White must look to the wings (including the f-file) to create play.

3.e4 d6



This is an important moment for understanding this type of position. I believe if White has a choice then he should refrain from playing c2-c4, which would seriously restrict White's chances of creating play on the queenside. It is important to realize that Black would not be obliged to reply 4...♘f6, transposing to Modern Benoni lines, but instead he can and should try 4...♗e7, trying to carry out his main positional idea of exchanging dark-squared bishops with ...♗g5. White's main choice by far in this specific position is 4.♘c3, but I found quite an interesting alternative.

4.♗b5†!?

What could be more natural than developing with check? In fact the main point is to avoid Black's thematic idea of trading dark-squared bishops with ...♗e7-g5, which would be helped by the pinning ...♗c8-g4, possibly followed by an exchange of Black's light-squared bishop.

Black is obviously at a crossroads as he decides with which minor piece to block the check: **C1) 4...♗d7** or **C2) 4...♘d7**.

C1) 4...♗d7 5.a4!

This is White's key idea after 4.♗b5†. Now Black's light-squared bishop is slightly misplaced on d7, while an exchange of bishops on b5 would be an obvious concession that would activate White's rook along the a-file.

Black now has three conceptually-different moves: The sensible lines are **C11) 5...g6** and **C12) 5...♗e7**.

In addition, we should also have a quick look at a tempo-losing positional blunder:

5...a6

It is important to understand exactly how we should react after this move.

6.♗xd7† ♘xd7 7.a5!

White has to fix the black pawns on the queenside, which will give him plenty of play there.

7...♗e7 8.♘f3 ♘gf6 9.♘c3 b5

Black clarifies the situation on the queenside.

10.axb6 ♕xb6

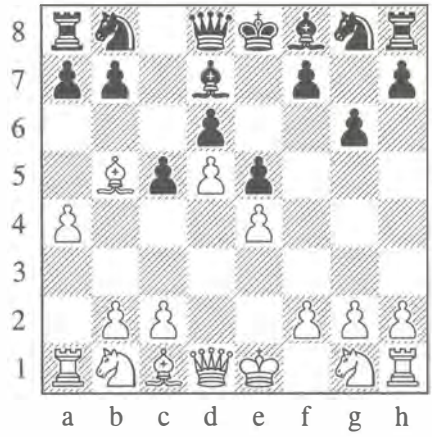
Obviously this is not the correct recapture, but even after the best 10...♘xb6 11.♕e2 ♕c8 12.0–0 0–0 13.h3, followed by ♗e3, ♘d2 and doubling rooks on the a-file, White's advantage is obvious.

11.♘d2 0–0 12.♘c4 ♕c7 13.♘a5 ♗d8 14.♕e2

White was much better in Muehlebach – Kaeding, Bad Ragaz 1992.

C11) 5...g6

Black intends to offer an exchange of dark-squared bishops by means of ...♗h6.



6.f4!

The most principled reply.

6...exf4

Only one game has reached this position, so I decided to check Black's other options:

6...a6 is met strongly by 7.♗d3 ♗g7 8.fxe5 ♗xe5 9.♘f3 with an advantage.

6...♗g7 7.♘c3 and if 7...♘e7 then 8.fxe5 ♗xe5 9.♘f3 ♗g7 10.♗f4 is pretty unpleasant for Black.

7.♗xf4 ♕f6

In his comments in *ChessBase Magazine 46* Stohl recommended the following move as a better option for Black:

7...♕e7 8.♘c3 ♗g7

If 8...♗h6 then White keeps an advantage after 9.♕d2 ♗xf4 10.♕xf4 ♘f6 11.♘f3 0–0 12.0–0 because Black cannot continue 12...♗xb5 in view of 13.♘xb5! ♘xe4 14.♖ae1 f5 15.♘d2 ♘d7 16.♘xe4 fxe4 17.♕xd6 with a big advantage.

After the text move I found an interesting opportunity for White.

9.♘f3!?

The normal 9.♕d3 also comes into consideration.

9...♗xc3†

After 9...♘f6 10.0–0 0–0 White gains a solid advantage by 11.e5 dxe5 12.♘xe5±.

10.bxc3 ♗xb5

I also analysed 10...♕xe4† 11.♕e2 ♕xe2† 12.♗xe2 ♘f6. There is no way Black can hold the d6-pawn (if 12...♔e7 then after 13.0–0 Black is helpless against the coming ♖e1 when the d6-pawn is falling). 13.0–0 ♘xd5 14.♗xd6 ♘c6 15.♘g5! White's threats are very serious.

11.axb5 ♕xe4† 12.♕e2 ♕xe2† 13.♔xe2 ♔d7 14.♘g5 ♘f6 15.♗g3!

White's initiative looks very dangerous, especially when we consider the state of Black's queenside pieces.



8.♘e2!N

I believe this is a strong improvement over 8.♕c1 ♗h6! 9.♗xh6 ♕h4† 10.g3 ♕xh6 when Black had a perfectly playable position in Korotylev – Malakhov, Moscow 1995.

8...♕xb2

Otherwise there is no point in Black's previous move.

9.♘d2

Black is way behind in development, but he can capture a second pawn.

9...♗xb5 10.axb5 ♕xb5

But after:

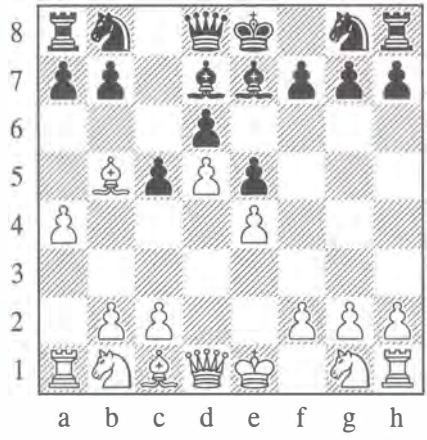
11.0–0

Black's position is critical, for instance:

11...♘d7 12.♖b1 ♕a6 13.♘c3!

14.♘b5 is on the way with decisive effect.

C12) 5...♗e7



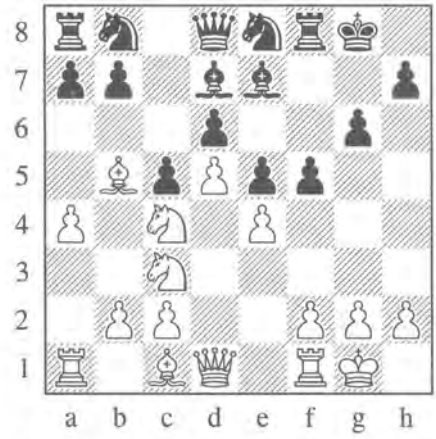
6.♘f3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.♘d2

White should avoid the immediate 8.0–0 as it would allow Black to play the useful 8...♗g4.

8...♘e8

Black intends to carry out the ...f7-f5 advance very quickly, but this concept is risky with his queenside so undeveloped. The following encounter saw:

9.♘c4 g6 10.0–0 f5



So far this is Shtyrenkov – Khudyakov, Alushta 2003, and now I developed the following line for White.

11.♗h6!?N ♖f7 12.f4 a6

12...exf4 13.e5 looks horrible for Black.

13.♗xd7 ♘xd7 14.♕e2

White is much better prepared for opening up the position.

C2) 4...♘d7 5.a4

Now Black has a wide choice, but in general we can break it down into studying two different concepts: one with Black developing his dark-squared bishop to e7, and the second with a fianchetto.

5...g6

5...♗e7 6.♘f3 ♘gf6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.0–0

And now I have again divided the variations in two: one where Black plays ...a7-a6 driving away the bishop from b5, and the second

where Black refrains from ...a7-a6 and tries to carry out his ideas on the kingside.

a) 8...a6 9.♗e2 ♘e8

Black can prevent a possible a4-a5 by 9...b6, but White easily develops his play on the queenside, as was proven convincingly in the following encounter: 10.♘d2 ♘e8 11.♘c4 ♗g5 12.♖b1 White prepares the b2-b4 advance. 12...♗xc1 13.♕xc1 ♕e7 14.b4 g6 15.♕e3 White was much better in Roiz – Daudzvardis, Biel 2005.

10.♘d2

The immediate 10.a5 also comes into consideration.

10...g6

The alternative plan is 10...♗g5, but here Black's counterplay also fails. 11.♘c4 ♗xc1 12.♕xc1 ♕h4 This was Mikhalev – Debowska, Mondariz 2003, and now White can simply continue his plan with 13.a5 and it is hard for Black to create counterplay, while White has easy play with ♖b1, ♕e3 and b2-b4.

11.♘c4 ♘g7

Black now manages to carry out ...f7-f5, but the perfect position of White's knight on c4 and Black's passive pieces on the queenside mean that opening the position is clearly favourable for White.

12.a5 f5



13.f4! fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘f6

This is Jaworski – Mammadov, Poland 2003, and here White could have decided the issue with:

15.♘exd6!N ♗xd6 16.fxe5+–

b) 8...♘e8 9.♘d2 g6

Another option is 9...♗g5 when the following encounter is quite thematic: 10.♘c4 ♗xc1 11.♕xc1 ♕e7 12.f4 exf4 13.♗xd7 A well-timed operation. 13...♗xd7 14.♕xf4 ♖d8 This is Sosnicki – Markowski, Poland (ch) 1998, and now the natural 15.e5!N dxe5 16.♘xe5 would clearly favour White, due to his strong passed pawn and more active pieces.

10.a5 ♗g5

The same position can be reached if Black plays first 9...♗g5 and then 10...g6.

11.♘c4N

This seems stronger than 11.a6 bxa6 12.♗xa6 ♗xa6 13.♖xa6 ♘b6 14.♕e2 ♘c7 15.♖a1 a5 as in Miton – Ivkov, Ottawa 2007.

11...♗xc1 12.♕xc1 a6 13.♗xd7 ♗xd7 14.♘b6

Otherwise Black has the idea of playing ...♗b5.

14...♖b8 15.f4 f6 16.♖b1

Followed by 17.b4; White has an obvious edge thanks to his extra space.

6.♘c3



6...♗g7

Black has twice tried:

6...♗h6

But this does not solve Black's problems.

7.♗xh6 ♘xh6 8.♕d2 ♘g8

A more natural option would have been 8...♘g4, and now I recommend 9.a5, grabbing more space on the queenside. 9...0–0 10.♘f3 White's position is preferable, as Black is struggling to create counterplay. For example: 10...f5 11.exf5 gxf5 (or 11...♖xf5 12.h3 ♘gf6 13.♘g5 ♘f8 14.♗d3 ♖f4 15.♘e2±) 12.♘g5 ♕e7 13.0–0 White has a clear advantage.

9.f4 exf4

Now I would prefer to deviate from the game we have been following.



10.♘f3!?N

The game Khenkin – Rogers, Switzerland 1998, continued 10.♕xf4 ♕f6 11.♕g3 when I believe Black should have played 11...♕e7 12.♘f3 ♘gf6 13.0–0 ♘h5! and matters are not so clear.

10...♘gf6

It would be dangerous for Black to hold on to the f4-pawn with 10...g5 as 11.e5! is very strong. For example: 11...dxe5 (after 11...g4 12.♕xf4! gxf3 13.0–0 Black faces a crushing attack) 12.♘xe5 (12.h4!?) 12...♘gf6 13.h4 0–0 14.hxg5 ♘xe5 15.gxf6 ♕xf6 16.0–0–0 White is clearly better.

11.♕xf4 ♕e7 12.0–0 0–0 13.♕h4!

White has the advantage, and the following line is more or less forced:

13...♔g7 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.♘g5 h6 16.♘h7! ♔xh7 17.♖xf6

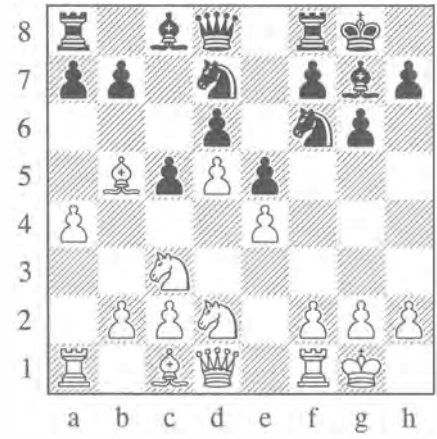
The endgame after 17.♕xf6 ♕e5 18.♘b5 ♗xb5 19.♕xe5 dxe5 20.axb5 is also better for White, but I believe White can ask for more.

17...♕e5 18.♖af1 ♗e8 19.♔h1±

With a clear advantage.

7.♘f3 ♘gf6 8.0–0 0–0 9.♘d2

There are now two continuations to consider:



9...a6

The alternative looks quite natural:

9...♘h5

This was played in Rodshtein – Andreikin, Internet (blitz) 2006, and now I believe more flexible than the game's 10.♘c4 would have been:

10.a5

I analysed the following variation:

10...a6 11.♗d3 ♘f4 12.♘c4 ♕e7 13.♖e1 ♘xd3

13...♖b8 14.♗f1 is very nice for White.

14.cxd3

Black now manages to carry out his ...f5-advance, but it leads nowhere.

14...f5 15.♖b1

Followed by 16.b4. Also worthy of consideration is 15.exf5 gxf5 16.f4!?.

10.♗e2 b6

It is clear that 10...b6, stopping a4-a5, is Black's best option.

The alternative leads to an inferior position: 10...♘e8 11.♘c4 ♕e7 12.a5 f5 13.f3 f4 We have reached a position that resembles a King's Indian, with one very important difference: instead of a pawn on c4 White has a beautiful knight. This allows him to develop his play on the queenside very quickly. The following line is just one possible example: 14.♖b1 h5 15.b4 cxb4 16.♖xb4 ♖f7 17.♗a3 ♗f8 18.♘a4 g5 19.♘ab6 (or 19.♕d2 ♖g7 20.♘ab6) 19...♘xb6 20.♘xb6 White had the upper hand in Matamoros Franco – Gonzales, Coria del Rio 1995.

11.♘c4 ♘e8 12.♖b1

White has also tried 12.♔h1 and 12.♗e3, but the text seems the most natural to me. It is also essential to understand that 12.f4 does not work properly for White, as after 12...exf4 13.♗xf4 ♕e7 Black keeps control over the e5-square.

12...♖b8 13.b4 f5 14.♗d2

No doubt White also has other options, but the text looks rather flexible.

14...♕c7

If 14...f4 then Black was concerned about the thematic 15.♗g4.

The position after the text move was reached in B. Lalic – Orenda, Pula 1997. Instead of Lalic's 15.♗d3 I suggest a surprising concept:

15.b5!?N

Black's pieces are grouped on the queenside and his idea of ...cxb4 followed by ...♘c5 looks pretty reliable, which is why I intend to close the queenside, thus securing a perfect position for the c4-knight, then switch to the kingside, using the fact that Black's pieces are a little too far from the action.

15...a5

I guess Black should avoid bxa6 followed by ♘b5.

16.exf5 gxf5 17.g4!

Fighting for the e4-square.

17...fxg4 18.♗xg4 ♘df6 19.♗xc8 ♕xc8



20.♕f3

White's prospects are much better, as Black is tied to the defence of the b6- and d6-pawns. White even has the luxury of 20.f4!? as a promising alternative.

D) 2...e6

It is likely this line will lead to a more open centre than 2...e5, so the action is speeded up and rapid development is essential.

After 3.c4 the position would transpose to the chapter on 1...e6 2.c4 c5, but here I decided to offer the reader a second choice, which I believe is even more favourable. Of course I

intend to meet both 2...♘f6 and 2...g6 with 3.c4, which will transpose to other chapters.

3.♘c3

Now we will examine three possible moves for Black: **D1) 3...♘f6**, **D2) 3...d6** and **D3) 3...exd5**.

D1) 3...♘f6 4.e4



4...d6

This is Black's best bet, as it is too dangerous for Black to capture on d5:

4...exd5?! 5.e5!

Black is already in trouble.

5...♘g8

Or 5...♕e7 6.♕e2 ♘e4 (perhaps slightly better is 6...♘g8, but after 7.♘xd5 ♕d8 8.♗f4! with the idea of 9.e6 followed by 10.♘c7, it is hard to believe Black can survive for long) 7.♘xd5 ♕xe5 8.c4 Black is helpless against White's threats. The game Saric – Stock, Pula 2006, continued for just a few more moves: 8...♘c6 9.♘f3 ♕f5 10.♘c3 and Black resigned.

6.♕xd5

White is clearly better due to his lead in development. The following is just one illustrative line:

6...♘c6 7.♘f3 d6 8.♗b5 ♘ge7 9.♕xd6 ♕xd6 10.exd6 ♘f5 11.♗f4 ♗xd6 12.♗xd6 ♘xd6 13.♗xc6† bxc6 14.0–0–0±

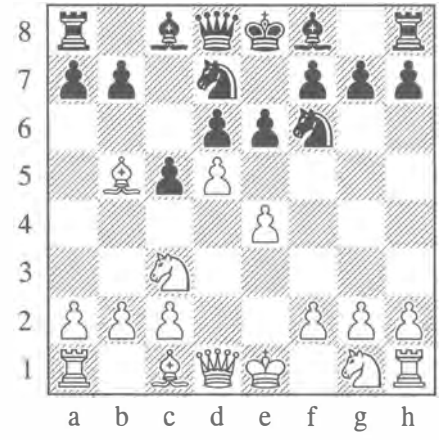
White had a huge positional advantage in Smejkal – Savon, Wijk aan Zee 1972.

5.♗b5†!?

This is White's second choice according to theory, but it is a good idea to disrupt Black's coordination. Now, as in an earlier line in this chapter, Black must decide which minor piece belongs on d7, but in this case one of the answers is definitely wrong. The options are **D11) 5...♘bd7?!** and **D12) 5...♗d7**.

D11) 5...♘bd7?!

This alternative is clearly inferior as it allows an immediate punch.



6.dxe6 fxe6 7.e5!

Black's pawn structure is damaged beyond repair.

7...dxe5 8.♘f3 a6

The other option brings Black no relief either: 8...e4 9.♘g5 a6 This was played in Quiroga – N. Diaz, Argentina 2004, and now very strong would have been: 10.♘xe6 ♕b6 11.♗c4 ♘e5 12.♘d5! With the following point: 12...♘xd5 13.♕h5† ♘f7 14.♕xd5 ♗xe6 15.♕xe6† ♕xe6 16.♗xe6 White is much better, thanks to his bishop pair and the weak e4-pawn, which is likely to drop off.

9.♗c4 ♘b6

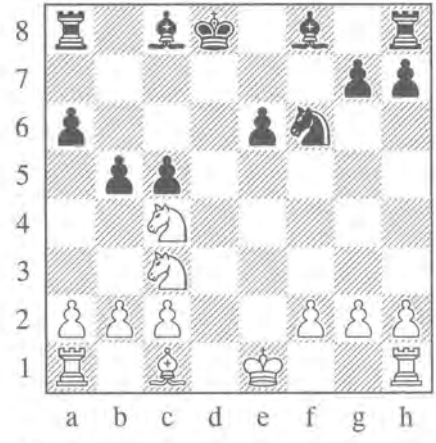
Another line runs: 9...♕e7 10.a4 g6 (somewhat better would have been 10...♘b6, although here after 11.♕e2 ♘xc4 12.♕xc4 ♕c7 13.0–0 ♗e7 14.♖e1 White's advantage is indisputable, as he regains the pawn and Black still has obvious targets in his pawn structure) 11.0–0 ♗g7 And now in Gomez Esteban – Ruiz Gomez, Spain 2001, the simple and strong 12.♕e2 0–0 13.♗g5 would have been clearly better for White.

10.♕xd8† ♔xd8 11.♘xe5 ♘xc4

The alternative is even worse: 11...♗d6 12.♘f7† ♔e7 13.♘xd6 ♔xd6 14.♗d3 White has a serious advantage, thanks to his bishop pair and Black's weakened pawn structure. The only game to reach this position continued: 14...♘bd5 15.♘e4† ♔c6 16.c4 ♘b4 17.♗b1 ♖d8 This is Biaggi – Szmetan, Buenos Aires 1992, and now White missed the simple 18.♗e3 ♘d3† 19.♗xd3 ♖xd3 20.♔e2± followed by capturing the c5-pawn.

12.♘xc4 b5

Now I believe White's best option is:



13.♘e5!N

It is essential for White to keep the knight alive to underline Black's problems. After 13.♘b6 ♖b8 14.♘xc8 ♖xc8 15.♗f4 ♗e7 16.0–0–0† ♔e8 17.♖he1 ♔f7 White still kept a slight edge in E. Cosma – Voiska, Romania 2004, but Black's position looks defendable to me.

13...♔e8 14.0–0

Now I examined the following possible line:

14...♗b7 15.♖e1 ♖d8 16.f3 ♗e7 17.♗g5±

White has a pleasant edge, thanks to his better pawn structure and Black's king, which is slightly exposed in the centre after losing the right to castle.

D12) 5...♗d7 6.a4

The attractive-looking line 6.dxe6 fxe6 7.♗c4 has scored highly for White, but Black's problems were only created because the players have refrained from developing naturally: 7...♗e7 8.♘f3 ♘c6N In *ChessBase Magazine 106* Atalik annotated his game against Nurkic and recommended 9.♗f4, but after 9...♘a5 10.♗e2 ♗c6! the position seems double-edged.



6...exd5

I believe Black has to clarify the pawn structure in the centre, as keeping the tension might backfire as in the following line: 6...a6 7.♗xd7† ♘bxd7 8.dxe6! fxe6 9.♘f3

Black's pawn structure may look flexible, but in fact it is rather vulnerable. He may experience problems defending the e6-pawn after a possible ♘g5, while ...h7-h6 would significantly weaken the light squares on the kingside.

9...♘e5

Black can also play 9...♗e7 when White replies 10.0–0.

a) Now Black has to prevent ♘g5 as, for example, after 10...0–0? 11.♘g5 White is simply winning.

b) He should play 10...h6 when after 11.♕e2 White is threatening the unpleasant 12.e5, damaging Black's pawn structure. After 11...e5 12.♘h4 0–0 13.♘f5± White is clearly better, as Black's weaknesses start to tell.

10.♘xe5 dxe5

Now in the game Fulgenzi – J.F. Campos, Argentina 1997, White continued with 11.♕e2, then transferred his queen to c4 and had the better chances, but I suggest that instead the reader should have a quick look at the position after:



11.♕xd8†N ♖xd8 12.a5!

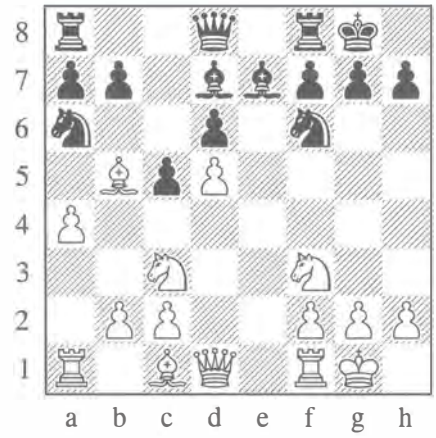
Obviously White is much better, due to the weaknesses in Black's pawn structure. Black is doomed to a passive defence.

7.exd5

White cannot hold on to a piece outpost on d5: 7.♘xd5 ♘xd5 8.♕xd5 ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.c3 0–0 11.0–0 ♗e6 12.♕d1 d5 And Black easily solved all his opening problems in Mochalov – Dyachkov, Orel 1995.

7...♗e7 8.♘f3 0–0 9.0–0 ♘a6

The text is Black's most common choice, but he has also tried 9...♗xb5. This looks like a slight concession, as it allows White to activate his queenside rook. 10.axb5 ♘bd7 11.h3 ♘b6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 This is Baltar Iglesias – Bello Filgueira, Ourense 2007, and now the simple 13.♕d3 h6 14.♗f4± would retain a pleasant edge, thanks to White's extra space.



10.♗xa6!

I believe 10.♖e1 would also retain a slight edge, but the text is the most principled. The arising position is favourable for White, not only because his better pawn structure naturally compensates for Black's bishop pair and half-open b-file, but because of the wonderful outpost for White's knight on c4.

10...bxa6 11.♘d2

This seems the best option, but White also had a pleasant advantage after 11.b3 ♗f5 12.♘d2 ♘d7 13.♘c4 ♗f6 14.♗b2 ♘b6 15.♘e3 ♗g6 16.♕d2 ♖e8 17.a5 ♘d7 18.♘a4 in Vaganian – Agzamov, Moscow 1983.

11...♖b8 12.♘c4

The following game is a good example of White's strategy:

12...♗f5 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.♗f4

The d6-pawn is an important target for White's minor pieces.

14...♗f8 15.♖xe8 ♘xe8 16.♕d2 ♘f6 17.♖e1 h6 18.h3 ♗h7 19.♖e2 ♕d7 20.f3 ♔h8 21.g4

White's space advantage is significant; Black faces a long, passive defence, N.V. Pedersen – Papp, Budapest 2006.

D2) 3...d6 4.e4

Now there is a split between **D21) 4...exd5** and **D22) 4...a6**.

D21) 4...exd5

4...♘f6 5.♗b5† transposes to the 3...♘f6-line.

5.♘xd5



5...♘f6

Black's other option looks inferior:

5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♘f6 7.♗c4 ♗e7 8.0–0 0–0 9.♗f4!

Now Black is forced to release the tension by:

9...♘xd5

Obviously White's e-pawn was poisoned, as Black loses material after 9...♘xe4? 10.♖e1.



10.exd5!N

In my opinion this tempting recapture is stronger than 10.♗xd5 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗h5 12.c3 ♕c7 when White was only slightly better in Sakaev – Szmetan, Internet 2003.

10...♘b8

10...♘a5 11.♗d3 leaves Black's knight poorly placed on the edge of the board.

11.♖e1 ♗g4

Instead 11...♘d7 allows the unpleasant 12.♕e2 ♘b6 13.♕xe7 ♘xc4 14.♕e4 ♘b6 15.c4± when White is clearly better.

12.♕d3 ♘d7 13.♘d2

White's chances are much better, thanks to his space advantage.

6.♘f3

We now have a further split based on whether Black captures immediately on d5: **D211) 6...♘xd5** or **D212) 6...♗e7**.

D211) 6...♘xd5 7.♕xd5 ♘c6

Another option is:

7...♗e7

Theory considers White's best bet to be:

8.♗g5

Both of Black's replies should eventually lead to the same position

8...♗xg5

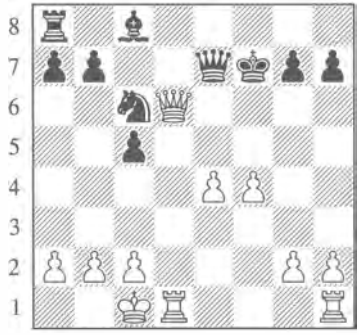
8...0–0 9.0–0–0 ♗xg5† (instead simply bad for Black is 9...♘c6? 10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.♕xd6 ♕xe4 and now both 12.♕xc5 and 12.♗d3 are clearly better for White) 10.♘xg5 transposes to 8...♗xg5.

9.♘xg5 0–0 10.♗c4 ♕e7 11.♘xf7 ♖xf7 12.0–0–0 ♘c6 13.♕xd6 ♔f8 14.♗xf7 ♔xf7

After a series of more or less forced moves we have a position from Epishin – Adams, Dortmund 1994. Now the most accurate continuation would have been:

15.f4!N

I examined the following variations:



a) 15...♗g4 runs into 16.♕xe7† ♔xe7 (16...♘xe7 would be stronger, but even so after 17.♖d6 White is clearly better) 17.♖d5! White wins a pawn, because he is threatening not only ♖xc5, but also ♖g5.

b) 15...♘d4 16.♕xe7† ♔xe7 17.f5! Restricting Black's bishop and taking control of the e6-square. Next White will play 18.c3, driving away Black's knight from d4. White's chances are better and he is playing for only two results.

c) 15...♕xd6 The main point is that after 16.♖xd6 ♔e7 17.♖d2 I believe White is better, thanks to his slight material advantage. Once again, White can play for a win without any danger of defeat.

8.♘g5



8...♕e7

Despite being only Black's second most popular choice, I believe this is the critical line. After the more common 8...♕c7 White continues with 9.♗c4 ♘e5 10.♗b5† ♗d7 11.♗xd7† ♕xd7 12.♗f4 ♘c6. Now 13.0–0–0 is usually played, but I prefer the quiet 13.c3 h6 14.♘f3 ♗e7, as in Utkin – Jezov, St Petersburg 2005. Now I recommend the following manoeuvre: 15.♘d2 0–0 16.♘c4 ♖ad8 17.0–0 b5 18.♘e3± White has a pleasant edge, thanks to his control over the d5-square.

9.♗b5

The only way to fight for an advantage. The following line was recommended by GM Jim Plaskett in *Chess Informant 77* late in 1999.

If instead 9.♗c4 then Black gains normal play with the unexpected 9...f6! 10.♕f7† ♔d7!.

9...♗d7 10.♗c4 ♘d8 11.0–0 h6 12.♘f3

I decided to continue the analysis a little further:

12...♗c6 13.♕d2 ♘e6 14.♗d5 ♕d7 15.b3 ♗e7 16.♗b2 0–0 17.♖fe1±

White retains a positional advantage, once again thanks to his control of the d5-square.

D212) 6...♗e7

This seems to me to be the most flexible development for Black.

7.♗b5†

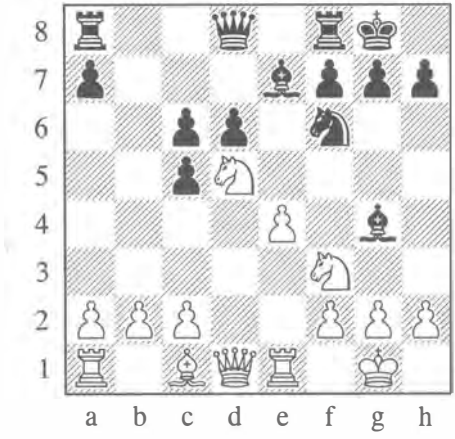
This is more ambitions than 7.♗c4 as then Black has 7...0–0 8.0–0 ♘xd5 9.♗xd5 ♘d7! and the black knight comes to either b6 or f6 to fight for the d5-square.

7...♘c6

Black has also tried: 7...♗d7 8.♗c4 0–0 9.0–0 ♗c6 (or 9...♘xd5 10.♗xd5 ♘c6 11.c3 and White has a pleasant edge) 10.♗f4 ♘xd5 This is Schlosser – Szalanczy, Velden 1993, and now it is of course tempting to maintain control over the d5-square, but here White could have played 11.exd5 with tempo, and after 11...♗d7 12.♕d3 White would enjoy a significant space advantage.

8.0–0 0–0 9.♖e1 ♗g4 10.♗xc6 bxc6

And now instead of 11.♘e3, which led to double-edged play after 11...♗e6 in Sutorikhin – Schroter, Zalaegerszeg 1992, White could have gained a favourable position with:



11.♘xe7†!N ♕xe7 12.h3 ♗xf3

If 12...♗h5 then White has 13.g4 ♗g6 14.e5 dxe5 15.♘xe5 ♖fe8 16.♗g5 with an obvious edge, thanks to his better pawn structure.

13.♕xf3 ♘d7 14.♗f4 ♘e5 15.♕c3 ♖fe8 16.♖ad1±

White has a stable advantage, again thanks to his better pawn structure.

D22) 4...a6

This is the more important line of this variation. Black hopes to benefit from delaying the capture on d5.

5.a4



I have figured out the following guidelines for White in this line: if we have the opportunity we should try to recapture with a piece on d5, but it is also important to prevent Black achieving a desirable pawn structure after ...e6xd5 e4xd5 with his dark-squared bishop developed on g7. Let's see how this works in practice:

5...♘f6

Black's other options include:

5...g6 6.♘f3 ♗g7

Dubious is 6...♗h6 as in Stohl – Lanc, Czechoslovakia 1990, and now White could have achieved a big advantage after 7.♗xh6 ♘xh6 8.♕d2 ♘g4 9.h3 ♘f6 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 11.0–0–0±.

7.♗c4

Instead 7.dxe6 does not work out well, because after 7...♗xe6 8.♗f4 Black has the annoying 8...♕b6! 9.♖b1 ♘c6 with acceptable play.

7...♘f6?

A serious error.

Also bad would have been 7...exd5? 8.♕xd5! ♕e7 9.♘g5 ♘h6 10.♗f4± and White is much better.

Probably Black should settle the game down with 7...e5.

8.dxe6!

White missed this opportunity in Tonka – Duthilleul, corr. 1958.

8...♗xe6 9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.e5 dxe5 11.♕xd8† ♔xd8 12.♘xe5

With a pleasant advantage.

5...exd5 6.♘xd5

Following the strategy I suggested above. The text move has been tested only once in tournament practice.

6.exd5 would allow 6...g6 and Black's knight might be developed to e7, which is exactly what we must try to avoid.

6...♘f6

I decided to examine this natural move and to compare with the line without including ...a7-a6 and a2-a4.

Instead 6...♘e7 was Szymanski – Dziuba, Trzebinia 1999, and now 7.♗c4 would leave Black with much fewer options compared with 6...♘f6.

7.♗c4

Now we lack the option of ♗b5, as we opted for in the line without the insertion of ...a7-a6 and a2-a4.

7...♗e7 8.♘f3 0–0 9.0–0 ♘xd5

Another line I looked at was 9...♘c6 10.♖e1 ♘xd5 (Black fails to equalize after 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘e5 13.♕e2±) 11.exd5 and White is better after either 11...♘a5 12.♗d3 or 11...♘b8 12.♗f4.

10.♗xd5 ♘d7

Here I believe insertion of a2-a4 and ...a7-a6 favours White, as he retains an advantage if 10...♘c6 11.c3 ♗e6 12.♗f4±.

11.♕d3 ♘b6

11...♘f6 12.♗c4 is also an edge for White.

12.♗b3

White is threatening 13.a5 and after:

12...a5 13.♗e3

He retains a pleasant advantage.



6.♗c4!

A very important moment. White's last move forces Black to clarify the pawn structure in the centre. Instead I believe Black has a reasonable game after 6.♘f3 exd5 7.exd5 ♗g4.

6...♗e7

Naturally 6...exd5 transposes to 5...exd5 7.♘xd5.

7.♘f3 0–0 8.0–0

Premature would be 8.dxe6?! ♗xe6 9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.e5 dxe5 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.♘xe5 ♘d5! followed by ...♗f6. After the text move Black has a decision to make.

8...exd5

The other path is 8...e5 accepting the loss of a tempo. After 9.h3 White has a favourable position and the extra time will certainly help.

9.♘xd5

Once again this transposes to the 5...exd5 line mentioned above.

D3) 3...exd5

The direct approach from Black, although now there is a rather obvious hole on d5.

4.♘xd5 d6

Black has other possibilities as well:

4...♘f6 is a slightly inaccurate move order, as it allows 5.♗g5! ♗e7 6.♗xf6 ♗xf6 7.c3 0–0 8.g3 ♘c6 9.♗g2 d6 as in Kaps – Mrdja, Montecatini Terme 2005. Now the natural 10.♘f3 ♖e8 11.0–0 ♗f5 12.♘d2± would leave White with a pleasant edge, thanks to his control over the d5-square.

4...♘e7 would allow 5.♗g5.



And now Black has at least three choices:

5...♘bc6 6.e4 d6 7.c3 ♗e6 This was played in Akselrod – Katalymov, Tomsk 2003, and now White should have played: 8.♘e2 ♕d7 9.♘ef4 0–0–0 10.♗b5 h6 11.♗xe7 ♗xe7 12.♘xe6 (also worth considering is 12.0–0 ♗g5 13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.f4 ♗f6 15.♕b3±) 12...fxe6 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♘xe7† ♕xe7 15.0–0 White is better, due to the exposed position of Black's monarch. White's key idea is to open up the play with ♖b1 and then b2-b4.

Black cannot solve his opening problems with 5...♕a5† 6.♗d2 ♕d8 because White has 7.♗c3! ♘xd5 8.♕xd5 d6 as in Vaganian – Quinteros, Biel 1985. Now I found the following nice improvement: 9.♘h3! The knight is heading for f4. 9...♘c6 10.♘f4 ♕e7 11.e3 ♗e6 12.♕f3 0–0–0 13.0–0–0± White has definite pressure.

5...h6 6.♗f6! A remarkable move; it is not so easy to break the pin. 6...♘bc6 7.e4 d6 This is Khalifman – Katalymov, Bad Woerishofen 1996, and now White should have played 8.♘e2! ♗e6 9.♘ef4 when Black is under serious pressure.

5.g3!?

This is a relatively rare continuation. More common are 5.♘f3 and 5.e4, but I believe White should take the opportunity to maintain control over the d5-square by fianchettoing his bishop.

5...♘f6

Now I recommend the following improvement:



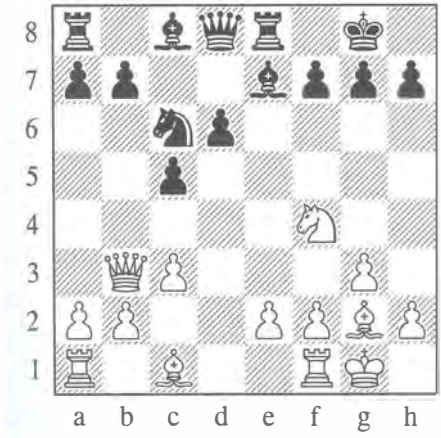
6.♘xf6†!N

Instead 6.♗g2 ♘xd5 7.♗xd5 ♘c6 8.♘f3 ♗e6 was less convincing in Fedorovsky – Billerbeck, Internet 2004.

6...♕xf6 7.♘h3!

The key move of my idea; the white knight is heading for f4 to control the d5-square. The position favours White. For example:

7...♘c6 8.♗g2 ♕d8 9.♘f4 ♗e7 10.c3 0–0 11.0–0 ♖e8 12.♕b3±



Followed by ♖d1 if necessary; White has total control over the d5-square.

Conclusion:

The Old Benoni lines are rare for a reason – White keeps a pleasant edge with sensible play. In most cases Black has an unpleasant choice between accepting a cramped position or breaking with ...e7-e6 and suffering with a weak point on d5 and a backward pawn on d6.

Chapter 13

Benoni Systems



Modern Benoni

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6

6.g3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0–0 9.0–0

A) 9...♗g4 166
B) 9...b6 167
C) 9...♖e8 10.♘d2 169
C1) 10...♘g4 169
C2) 10...b6 169
D) 9...a6 170
E) 9...♕e7 173
F) 9...♘a6 10.h3 175
F1) 10...♗d7 176
F2) 10...♖e8 177
F3) 10...♘c7 178
G) 9...♘bd7 10.a4! ♖e8 11.♘d2 a6 12.h3 179
G1) 12...♘h5 13.♘ce4 181
G2) 12...♖b8 13.♘c4 182
G21) 13...♘b6 14.♘a3 ♗d7 15.e4 182
G211) 15...♘c8 184
G212) 15...♕c7 185
G22) 13...♘e5 14.♘a3 186
G221) 14...♕c7?! 187
G223) 14...♗d7 188
G224) 14...♘h5 15.e4 189
G2241) 15...♗d7 189
G2242)15...♖f8 16.♔h2 192
G22421) 16...♗d7 193
G22422) 16...f5 194
G2243) 15...f5 196

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6

The Modern Benoni is an ambitious choice by Black, creating an asymmetrical pawn structure. White automatically gains more space in the centre and now our standard kingside fianchetto will deter Black's attacking hopes.

6.g3

Now, in addition to the usual 6...g6 I should also mention the following move:

6...♗e7

This is actually Black's second choice, but its low relevance is exemplified by how rarely it is seen in practice nowadays. Black's dark-squared bishop is pretty passive on e7; he cannot hope to achieve the sort of active play he often does in the main lines.

7.♗g2 0–0 8.♘f3 ♖e8

The best arrangement of the pieces.

White has a comfortable edge after 8...♘a6 9.0–0 ♘c7 10.a4 ♗f5 11.♘d2 ♕d7, as in V. Mikhalevski – Crouch, London 1999. Here, as is common in the Modern Benoni, White should not fear exchanging the light-squared bishops. After the natural 12.e4 ♗h3 13.♘c4 he would have secured a nice advantage; Black's pieces are too passive.

9.0–0 ♗f8 10.♘d2

Obviously White must establish control over the e4-square.

10...♘a6

Another option is 10...b6. I like White's play in the following game: 11.h3 ♘bd7 12.a4 ♗a6 13.b3 ♕b8 14.♘c4 ♘e5 15.♘a3!± White was firmly in control in Komljenovic – Orev, Ruse 1984.

11.♘c4 ♖b8

This is the point of Black's set-up.

12.a4

This is essentially forced, but it does give Black's knight the b4-square.

12...♘b4

This position has arisen six times in tournament practice. The statistics are great for Black, thanks to a 4/4 score by Jacob Murey. However, the position might not live up to the reputation...



I believe White can improve his play with:

13.♗f4!?N

In all six games White went for 13.e4, and Black had decent play after 13...b6. For example: 14.♗f4 ♗a6 15.b3 g6 16.♖e1 ♗xc4 17.bxc4 a6 18.♕d2 ♘d7 was Chernin – Murey, Paris 1989.

13...♗f5

The other options here are:

13...a6 is of course met with 14.a5!, fixing Black's pawn structure on the queenside. Black does not have enough time to prepare the ...b5 break.

13...b6 is met strongly with: 14.♘b5! ♗a6 15.♘cxd6 ♗xd6 16.♘xd6 ♗xe2 (if Black tries 16...♖xe2, then White has the strong move 17.♘b5!, winning material) 17.♘xe8 ♗xd1 18.♘xf6† gxf6 19.♖axd1 White has a big advantage thanks to his passed pawn.

14.♖c1 ♘h5

White's bishop on f4 is very annoying, so Black tries to release the pressure on the d6-pawn.

14...♘e4 does not work in view of 15.f3! with the following point: 15...♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♘a2 17.♖c2! ♗xc2 18.♕xc2 ♘xc3 19.♕xc3 ♖xe2 20.♖b1± and White is much better.

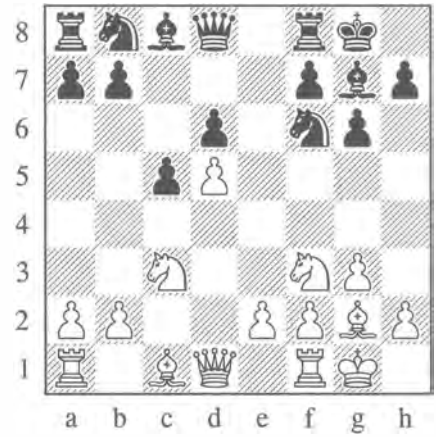
15.♗d2 ♘f6 16.f3 a6

A nice point is that 16...b6 17.e4 ♗c8 18.♘b5 a6 allows 19.♘d4!±.

17.a5 ♗d7 18.♘b6!

White has a comfortable plus.

6...g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0–0 9.0–0



This is the initial position of Fianchetto Variation of the Modern Benoni. Black has a huge choice here. We will deal with seven commonly-played continuations. They are: **A) 9...♗g4**, **B) 9...b6**, **C) 9...♖e8**, **D) 9...a6** 10.a4 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 and now not 11...♖e8, **E) 9...♕e7**, **F) 9...♘a6**, and the main line with **G) 9...♘bd7** 10.a4 ♖e8 11.♘d2 a6 12.h3.

A) 9...♗g4

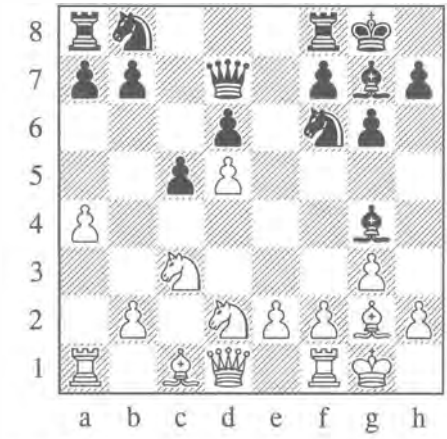
This seems to me to be Black's worst option here. Black executes a typical idea, exchanging light-squared bishops, but in return he loses coordination and allows White to regroup his pieces and effortlessly create pressure against the d6-pawn.

10.♘d2 ♕d7

Black has tried other moves as well, but then I do not see any point to playing 9...♗g4.

11.a4

This move is considered White's main option, though recently some players have also tried 11.f3. The point of the text move is to secure a safe place for White's knight which will land on c4 next move.



11...♗h3

Black has also tried 11...♘a6. After 12.♘c4 there are three interesting options to consider.

a) 12...♗h3

Now White continues his plan:

13.♗f4 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2

Now it is obvious that Black should defend his d6-pawn with:

14...♘e8N

Other moves simply do not work:

14...♘h5? 15.♗xd6 ♖fe8 was played in N.V. Pedersen – Bradbury, Copenhagen 1997, and now the simple 16.f3 f5 17.♖e1, followed by 18.e4, would leave White with a healthy extra pawn.

14...♖fd8? 15.♗xd6 ♘e8 16.♗e5! ♗xe5 17.♘xe5 and White was a pawn up in Razuvaev – Gufeld, Chelyabinsk 1972.

Now the play might continue:

15.♘b5 ♘b4 16.f3!

White's positional pressure is obvious. Note that 16.♘bxd6? did not work in view of 16...g5! 17.♘xe8 ♕xe8, followed by 18...♕e4 winning the c4-knight.

b) 12...♖fd8 13.♗f4 ♘e8 14.♕d2 ♗h3 15.e4 ♗xg2 16.♔xg2 gave White a serious positional edge in Vesely – Hacha, Czech Republic 2000.

c) 12...♘c7 13.♗f4 ♘fe8 14.♕d2 and White was clearly better in Lacrosse – Cuypers, Gent 2003.

12.♘c4 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♕e7

Black can also defend the d6-pawn passively: 13...♖d8 14.♗f4 ♘e8 Now after 15.♕d2 ♘a6 16.e4 we transpose to the game Vesely – Hacha, which was mentioned above via the 11...♘a6 move order.

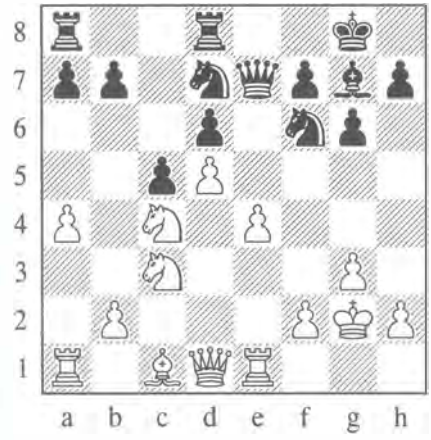
14.♖e1

White can also try 14.f3 ♘bd7 15.♗f4 ♘e8 16.♕d2 ♘e5 17.♕e3± with a pleasant edge, as in M. Makarov – Gufeld, Podolsk 1992.

14...♘bd7

White is ready for: 14...♘e4 15.♕c2 ♘xc3 (White is also clearly better after 15...f5 16.♘xe4 fxe4 17.♗f4 ♖xf4 [17...♖d8 18.f3!±] 18.gxf4 ♘a6 19.f3± and Black does not have compensation for the exchange) 16.bxc3 ♘d7 17.♗f4 ♘e5 18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.f4 ♗g7 20.e4±

15.e4 ♖fd8



16.f4

White had a very attractive position in Gleizerov – Obukhov, Voronezh 2006.

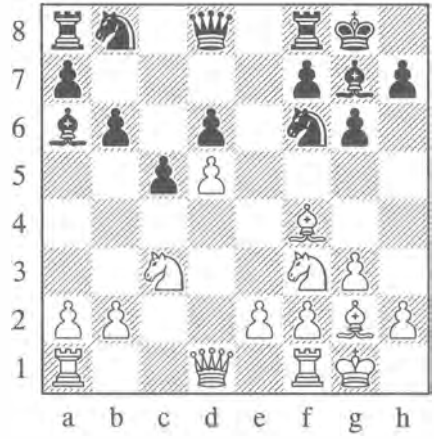
B) 9...b6

A very rare guest in modern tournaments, but it is very important to know how to deal with Black's queenside fianchetto.

10.♗f4

This is not White's most common choice, but the text seems to me the most natural move.

10...♗a6



11.a4!

Certainly White should prevent a possible ...b6-b5 advance. Also, in some cases White will have the idea of playing ♘b5, forcing Black to give up his light-squared bishop. Less clear is 11.♖e1 b5 12.a3 ♖e8.

11...♖e8

The alternative is:

11...♕c7

Black defends the d6-pawn and thus prepares ...♘bd7.

12.♖e1 ♘bd7 13.h3

White makes another useful move and is ready to play 14.e4 next.

Not so clear is 13.♘b5 ♗xb5 14.axb5 ♖fe8. 13...♘e8



Here I believe White should have played:
14.♕b3!?N

In the game Bacrot – Derieux, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007, Black reached an acceptable position after 14.♕c2 ♕b7 15.e4 ♘e5 16.♘xe5 dxe5 17.♗e3 ♘d6∞.

14...♘e5

If Black plays 14...♕b7 then quite strong is 15.♘b5 ♗xb5 16.axb5 a6 17.♘d2 and White has the advantage.

15.♖ed1!

White keeps slightly better chances, thanks to his space advantage.



12.♖e1!?N

This seems more logical than 12.♕c2 ♕e7 13.♖fe1 ♘bd7 14.♖ad1, as in Scheeren – Wind, Netherlands 1978, when Black missed the strong move 14...♘e4!, with good play.

12...♘e4

Black has no time to arrange his pieces as in the previous example, with 12...♕e7 13.e4 ♘bd7, as now White fires his central break 14.e5! with the following point: 14...♘xe5 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.d6 ♕d7 17.♗xa8 exf4 18.♖xe8† ♕xe8 19.♗f3± Black does not have any compensation for being an exchange down.

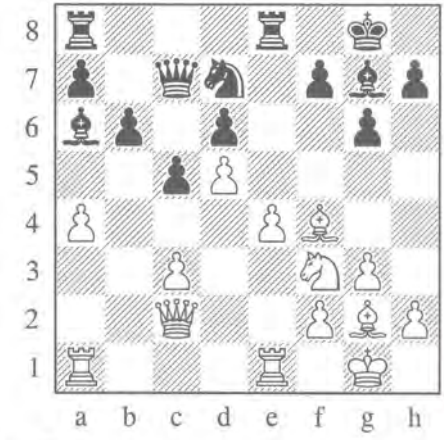
13.♕c2!

Of course it is important to chase Black's knight away from the e4-square. Unclear is 13.♘xe4 ♖xe4 14.♘g5 ♖d4!.

13...♘xc3

Black cannot play 13...♕e7 14.♘xe4 ♕xe4 15.♕xe4 ♖xe4 in view of a very nice tactical idea: 16.♘g5 ♖b4 (after 16...♖d4 White has the annoying 17.a5!) 17.♘e6! And Black cannot do much against White's idea of ♘c7.

14.bxc3 ♘d7 15.e4 ♕c7



16.♖ab1±

I believe White has a favourable pawn structure, as next he can play c3-c4, which will block all Black's play on the queenside.

C) 9...♖e8 10.♘d2

Another popular option is 10.♗f4, but that is another story. After the text move we should look at **C1) 10...♘g4** and **C2) 10...b6**.

C1) 10...♘g4

I had not paid attention to this line in my original analysis, but saw that it was given a good press in John Watson's *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*. This is a rather provocative move, and I would be surprised if it achieves equality if White reacts in the best way; which is like this:

11.h3 ♘e5 12.f4 ♘ed7 13.e4 ♘a6

If 13...f5 14.exf5 gxf5 as in Rotstein – Eisenbeiser, Germany 2005, I like the positional 15.a4N and I believe White is ready to change the pawn structure: 15...♘a6 (15...♘f6 16.♘c4 does not change much) 16.♘b5! An important idea (inaccurate would be 16.♘c4 in view of the thematic 16...♘b6!). 16...♘f6 17.♘c4 ♗f8 18.b3! ♘b4 19.♗b2 ♘e4 20.♖e1 a6 21.♘c3 White is clearly better, due to his much more active pieces.

14.♔h2N

This useful move is a serious improvement over the premature 14.e5?! when after 14...dxe5 15.f5 ♘f6 16.fxg6 hxg6 Black had a slight edge in L. Olsson – Allemann, Azerbaijan 2003.

After the text move play might continue:

14...♘c7 15.a4 ♖b8 16.♘c4 ♘b6 17.♘e3

I do not see what Black achieved by jumping his knight all over the board, while White has developed his pieces harmoniously. White has a pleasant advantage.

C2) 10...b6

This is the only move that might have an independent value after 9...♖e8. Other options such as 10...♘bd7, or 10...a6 11.a4 ♘bd7, would just transpose to other variations.



11.a4

Recently 10...b6 has been employed at the very highest level. Black had a reasonable game after 11.♖e1 ♘bd7 12.h3 ♗a6 13.♕a4 ♗d3!? in Aronian – Radjabov, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

11...♗a6 12.♘b5

This is of course one of the points of White's previous move.

12...♘bd7 13.♖e1

White defends the e2-pawn, thus threatening the d6-pawn and forcing Black to clarify the situation. Instead White is only slightly better after 13.♘c4 ♗xb5 14.axb5 ♘e5 15.♘xe5 ♖xe5 and Black had a fairly reliable position in Ruemmele – Sender, corr. 2001.

13...♗xb5 14.axb5 ♕c7

14...♖e7

This was played in Postny – Laznicka, Internet (blitz) 2006. I have found a clear-cut route to an advantage:

15.e4 ♘e8

15...♘e5 is met strongly by 16.♘b3! and Black has no chance of playing 16...c4 followed by ...♘d3 because in this case White would have the ♘b3-d4-c6 manoeuvre.

16.♘c4 ♘e5 17.♘a3! ♕d7

White is clearly better after 17...c4 18.♗g5 ♗f6 19.♗xf6 ♘xf6 20.♕d4!±.

18.f4 ♘g4 19.e5!

This works perfectly for White, for example: 19...dxe5 20.♗f3! f5 21.d6

White wins material.



15.e4!?N

In my opinion White is ready for this advance, especially as Black is doing fine after both 15.♕b3 ♘e5 16.♖a4 ♘fd7 as in Burmakin – Pigusov, St Petersburg 1998, and 15.♕c2 a6! 16.bxa6 b5∞ as occurred in Belegotti – Sandstroem, corr. 2003.

15...♘e5

White's only problem is that he has weakened the d3-square.

16.♗f1!

White's light-squared bishop not only takes control of d3, but also prevents Black's freeing ideas on the queenside, which we saw in the line above after 15.♕c2.

16...g5

This prevents the immediate 17.f4, but at the same time weakens the f5-square.

White should not worry about 16...c4, since after 17.♖a4! c3 (Black fails to obtain decent compensation for the pawn after 17...♘fd7 18.♘xc4 ♘c5 19.♖b4!±) 18.bxc3 ♕xc3 19.♖e3 ♕c7 20.♗b2 White is clearly better from a positional point of view.

17.♖a4!

A very strong multipurpose move; the rook takes control of the 4th rank (including the key c4-square and the e4-pawn) as well as preparing to double the heavy pieces along the a-file.

17...g4

After 17...♖e7 18.b3 ♖ae8 19.♗b2± White is also firmly in control.

18.h3 h5 19.f4!

Now that Black has weakened his kingside, it is the right time to strike.

19...gxf3 20.♘xf3

I think White retains the better chances, especially thanks to the following line.

20...♘xf3† 21.♕xf3 ♘xd5 22.♗c4 ♘f6 23.♖f1!

White has conjured up a dangerous initiative on the kingside.

D) 9...a6 10.a4 ♘bd7



This is also a very popular move order.

11.♘d2

Now Black usually plays 11...♖e8, which transposes to our main line (line G), so we will instead have a look at three other options for Black.

11...♘e8

If 11...♖b8 then after 12.♘c4 ♘e8 13.a5 we transpose to a position that will be examined in the 11...♘e8 line.

In the diagram position, as in so many other Benoni positions, Black can move his knight to h5, clearing the f6-square and possibly introducing ideas of ...f7-f5:

11...♘h5 12.♘ce4 ♘df6 13.♘xf6†

Obviously Black has a choice of recaptures.

13...♕xf6

If 13...♘xf6 then 14.♘c4 ♖e8 15.♗f4 ♗f8. If Black needs to defend the d6-pawn in such an awkward way, it means something has gone badly wrong for him. White gained a pleasant edge after 16.a5 ♘h5 17.♗d2 ♗d7 18.♘b6 ♖b8 19.e4 ♗g7 20.♗c3 ♘f6 21.♖e1 ♗b5 22.f4 ♘d7 23.♘xd7 ♕xd7 24.e5! in Tkachiev – Bezold, Croatia 1997.

14.♘c4 ♖b8

I also examined 14...♗d7 when play should continue 15.♘b6 ♖ad8 16.e4 ♕e7, with the idea of carrying out ...f7-f5, as I do not see any other constructive ideas for Black. 17.♕c2 ♗d4 This looks like a nice square for the bishop (if instead 17...f5 then White reacts, by analogy with the main line, with 18.♗h3). 18.♗d2 f5 19.♗h3! This important resource restricts Black's activity. In my opinion White has better chances, which is confirmed by the following variation: 19...♘f6 20.exf5 ♗xf5 21.♗xf5 gxf5 22.♖ae1 ♘e4 23.♗f4 White has a simple plan of strengthening his position with ♔g2 and f2-f3.

However, after 14...♖b8 Black has a fantastic score, winning three games out of four; obviously this fact forced me to do some homework.



15.h3!?N

A new move in this position, as previously White had tried 15.♘b6, 15.a5 and 15.♗d2. Actually, when I worked on this position I came to the conclusion that White should not hurry with his play on the queenside, because ...b7-b5 is not much of a threat, as White's knight would effectively penetrate to c6 via a5. On the other hand, there is no point in playing e2-e4, as that would shut out our light-squared bishop and thus weaken the force of ♘a5-c6 in reply to ...b7-b5. White's last move prepares to chase away Black's knight with g3-g4 after one more preparatory move (♕d2), taking control of the f4-square.

I examined the following natural line:

15...♗d7 16.♕d2

Following our plan; now g3-g4 is a serious threat.

16...b5

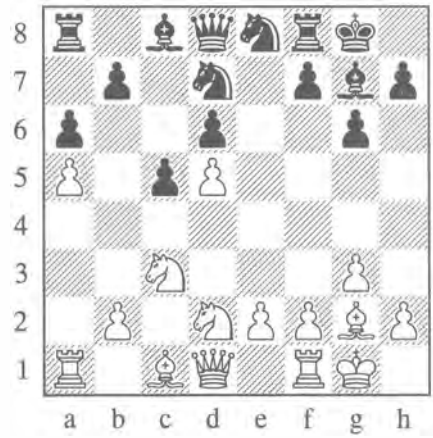
After 16...♕e7 White immediately starts to attack the d6-pawn with 17.♕e3! and White is better in the complications after 17...♕xe3 18.♗xe3 b5 19.♘xd6 ♗xb2 20.♖a2.

17.♘a5 ♕d4 18.♕xd4 ♗xd4 19.g4 ♘g7 20.♘c6 bxa4 21.♖xa4 ♖b6 22.♖a2

White clearly has the initiative.

12.a5

I think Black is doing fine after 12.♘c4 ♘b6!. For example, 13.♘a3 ♗d7 14.a5 ♘c8 15.♘c4 ♗b5 16.♕b3 ♗xc4 17.♕xc4 b5 18.axb6 ♘xb6 19.♕d3 ♘c7 and Black has good counterplay in typical Benoni style.



12...♖b8

The alternative is:

12...b6

Or 12...b5 would lead to the same thing.

13.axb6 ♘xb6 14.♘b3

Threatening ♘a5-c6.

14...♘c4 15.♖a4 ♘b6 16.♖a2!

First, White improves the position of his rook.

16...♘c4 17.♕c2

I like this move more than 17.♕d3.

17...♗d7

There is also 17...♖b8 but then White has a strong idea: 18.♘e4 ♖b4 19.♘ed2! ♘e5 20.♘a5 with a positional advantage.

18.♘d2 ♘xd2

After 18...♘b6 19.b3 White has easy play on the queenside with ♗b2, ♘c4 and so on.

19.♗xd2 ♘f6 20.♖fa1 ♗c8

Certainly better was 20...♕b6, but then White can execute the same idea as in the game: 21.♘d1 ♗b5 22.♗c3 with a slight edge.

21.♘d1 ♖e8 22.♗c3 h5 23.e4 h4 24.♘e3

White had a pleasant advantage in Avrukh – Papaioannou, Greece 2005.

13.♘c4 ♘e5 14.♘b6

White has nothing special after 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗h6 ♘g7 16.♕d2 b6.

14...♘c7

Another, but less popular, option is:

14...♘d7



15.♘ca4!

In my opinion this is the only way White can fight for an advantage. White keeps his knight in order to block Black's counterplay on the queenside, and eventually the knight will switch to c4 to attack the d6-pawn.

The alternative is 15.♘xc8 ♖xc8. Usually in Benoni-type positions Black is happy to get rid of his light-squared bishop, which can hardly find a decent square. Without it, Black gains more room for manoeuvre on the queenside and can easily implement ...b7-b5. For example, 16.♗d2 ♘c7 17.♕a4 ♖b8 18.♖ab1 b5 19.axb6 ♘xb6 20.♕a2 and here a draw was agreed in Melnikov – Ulibin, Kursk 1987. Black has good play.

15...♘xb6 16.♘xb6

I found only one relevant example in my database:

16...♘c7 17.♘c4 ♘b5 18.♗f4 ♖e8 19.♖e1

I would prefer 19.e4 but the text is good enough.

19...♕e7 20.♕d2

White had definite positional pressure in Henrichs – Kunin, Bad Woerishofen 2008.

15.♗d2

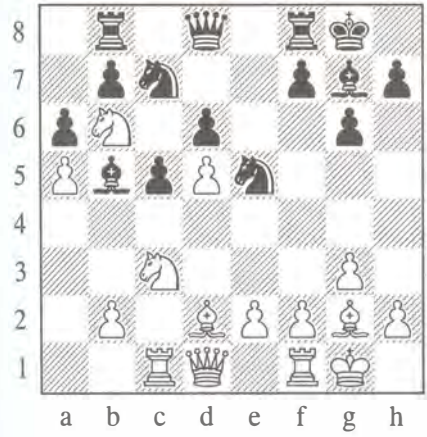
I recommend this calm move as White's best idea. The main plan is to carry out the b2-b4 advance, prising open the c-file for White's heavy pieces.

15...♗d7

If 15...♘b5 16.♘ca4 ♕e7 17.♖c1 and White will execute his idea, as b2-b4 is coming next.

16.♖c1 ♗b5

This position was reached in Birnbaum – Pohl, corr. 1986, and now White should have consistently followed his plan:



17.b4!N cxb4 18.♘ca4 b3 19.♖e1±

White will soon regain the pawn and has opened up the queenside, which is in his favour, though Black's position remains solid.

E) 9...♕e7

This continuation was quite popular in the 1970s, but has recently been completely out of fashion.

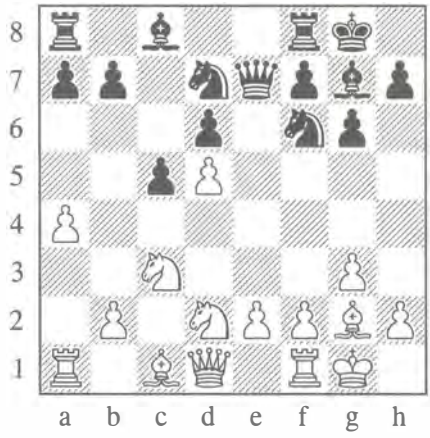
10.♘d2

White tries to carry out his main positional idea of transferring his knight to c4, while also keeping control over the e4-square, thus avoiding any ...♘e4 lunges.

10...♘bd7

Now Black is ready to meet 11.♘c4 with 11...♘e5. The reader should know the following important rule in Benoni-type positions: in most cases the exchange of one pair of knight clearly favours Black, as it allows him more breathing room to create his counterplay.

11.a4



A useful move that grabs more space on the queenside. Now I will examine Black's two most popular replies:

11...♘h5

The alternative is:

11...b6 12.♘c4

Black is fine after 12.h3 ♘h5! (with the idea of playing ...f7-f5 next) 13.♘de4 ♘df6. Instead, 13...f5? would be premature in view of 14.♘g5 and White's knight lands on e6.

12...♘e5 13.♘a3

As you will see from the main line, this is a thematic idea. White should avoid exchanging a pair of knights, as I mentioned above. Now he intends to drive Black's

knight away from e5 with f2-f4 at the right moment.

After 13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.♕d3 a6 Black was doing quite well in Cappello – Cosulich, Sottomarina 1973.

13...♗a6 14.♘cb5!

A very good positional move; White's knight blocks Black's light-squared bishop, renewing White main idea of f2-f4.

14...♗xb5

White is clearly better after 14...♖fe8 15.f4 ♘ed7 16.♘c4 ♗xb5 17.axb5.

15.axb5 a6



I recommend the following improvement:

16.♗f4!N

In Szmetan – Gamarra Caceres, Fortaleza 1975, Black managed to obtain a good position after 16.♕b3 axb5 17.♕xb5 ♖fb8 18.♗d2 ♘e8! 19.♘c2 ♘c7 20.♕b3 b5.

16...axb5

More or less the same type of position arises after 16...♘h5 17.♗xe5 ♗xe5 18.♕b3±.

17.♘xb5 ♘h5

If 17...♘fd7 then White has the neat 18.♖a7! and if Black captures on a7, White's knight will come to the c6-square.

18.♗xe5 ♕xe5 19.e3±

White is setting the tone.

12.♘c4

Since the game Hort – Nunn, Hastings 1975, it has been well known that Black obtains good play after 12.e4 ♘e5 13.♕e2 f5 14.f4, and now Black can simply go 14...♘f7!∞ with double-edged play.

12...♘e5

Black has no time for 12...f5? as after 13.♘b5! he cannot defend the d6-pawn.

13.♘xe5

The roles are reversed, and now it is White who has no time for 13.♘a3 as Black is ready to play 13...f5 with good play, so this is one of the rare cases when we have to swap a pair of knights.

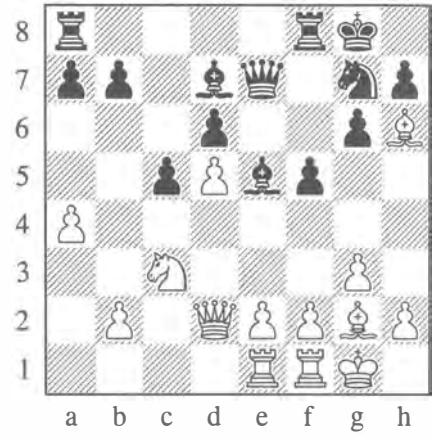
13...♗xe5 14.♗h6 ♘g7

I also examined 14...♖e8 15.e4 f5 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.h3 ♘f6 18.♕d2± and White is a little better due to the slightly exposed position of the black king, but this may be the lesser evil for Black.

15.♕d2

White has mobilized his forces and is ready to push his central pawns.

15...f5 16.♖ae1 ♗d7



17.f4 ♗f6 18.e4

Now Black comes under strong pressure.

18...♗d4† 19.♔h1 ♗xc3

Otherwise Black cannot stop e4-e5. For example, 19...♖fe8 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 ♗xe5 22.d6! ♕xd6 23.♖xe5 ♕xe5 24.♕xd7± and White has a material advantage.

20.♕xc3 fxe4 21.♖xe4 ♕f7

Black is trying to hold on, but it is obvious that without his dark-squared bishop Black's position is highly dubious.

22.h3 ♖fe8 23.♖xe8† ♖xe8 24.g4 ♗xa4

This position was reached in Haba – Kanovsky, Czech Republic 2006, and now I suggest a new move:

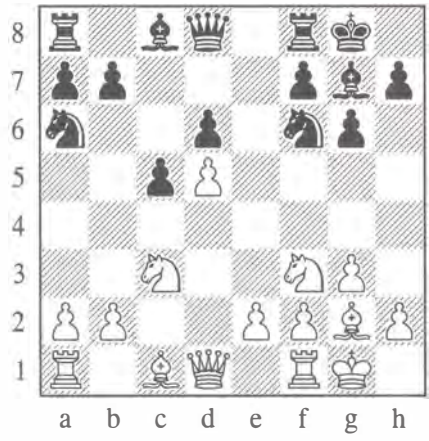
25.♖a1!?N ♗b5

Black loses after 25...b5 26.b3 b4 27.♕xg7†!.

26.♖xa7 ♗a6 27.♔h2

White's advantage is indisputable. 28.b4 will most likely follow, while Black is doomed to a passive defence.

F) 9...♘a6



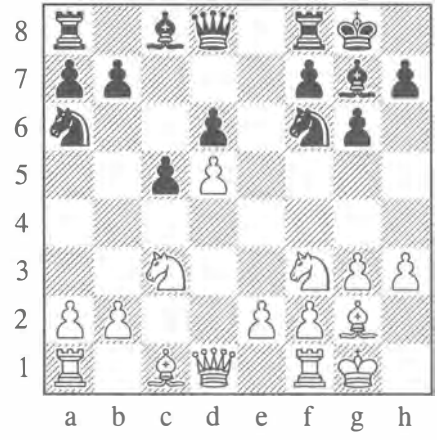
This is a typical idea in Benoni variations; the knight transfers to c7, where it helps carry out the ...b7-b5 advance.

10.h3

After seriously investigating this line, I came to the conclusion that this calm move is White's best chance of gaining an opening advantage.

White's main problem is that after 10.♘d2 ♘c7 11.♘c4 (or 11.a4 b6) Black is doing fine after: 11...b5! 12.♘xd6 (to the uninitiated, this may be a shock, but in fact it is a well known move) 12...♕xd6 13.♗f4 ♕b6 14.d6 ♘e6 The arising complications are far from clear. For those who are interested in playing this line with Black, I would recommend studying the game Gleizerov – Novgorodsky, Russia 2007.

10.e4 seems rather premature to me, as it allows Black to play ...♗g4, favourably exchanging his light-squared bishop. After 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♗xf3 ♘c7 13.a4 a6 14.a5 ♘b5 Black had fine play in Z. Varga – Gyimesi, Kecskemet 1997.



Now Black has three main options: **F1) 10...♗d7**, **F2) 10...♖e8** or **F3) 10...♘c7**.

One very minor option can be quickly dismissed:

10...♖b8?!

This common method of supporting the ...b7-b5 advance does not work in this case, as White breaks in the centre very effectively: 11.e4 b5 12.e5! ♘e8

If instead 12...dxe5 13.♘xe5 ♘xd5 (or 13...♗b7 14.♘c6 ♗xc6 15.dxc6± leaves White with a large positional advantage) 14.♘xf7! and White is clearly better.

13.♗f4 ♘ac7

This position was reached in Ligterink – I. Wells, Manchester 1981, and now White had a simple and strong option:

14.exd6N ♘xd6 15.♘e5 ♗xe5 16.♗xe5

White has a clear advantage, as Black will really miss his dark-squared bishop.

F1) 10...♗d7

Another typical idea in Benoni positions; Black wants to provoke White into playing a2-a4, when Black's knight gains a fine square on b4.

11.e4

I like this move more than 11.a4 ♘b4.

11...♖e8

Before playing ...b7-b5, Black inserts the moves ...♖e8 and ♖e1.

Clearly worse for Black is: 11...♕c8?! 12.♗f4! ♗xh3 (a better option was 12...♘e8, but even so after 13.♔h2 Black's set-up looks pointless) 13.♗xd6 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♖e8 15.♖e1 ♕d7 16.e5 ♘g4 17.♘e4± White was clearly better due to his strong central pawns in Alburt – D. Gurevich, USA (ch) 1989.

12.♖e1 b5 13.e5 dxe5 14.♘xe5

Black is absolutely fine after 14.♖xe5 b4 15.♘e2 ♘e4! 16.♖xe8† ♕xe8, as in Urban – Panczyk, Poland (ch) 1992.

14...b4 15.♘a4

The only way! Black has no problems after 15.♘b1 ♘h5! 16.♘c6 ♗xc6 17.dxc6 ♗d4!, as in Birnboim – Blees, Tel Aviv 1988.

15...♕a5

Now I have found a serious improvement:



16.b3!N

Black is fine after 16.♘xd7 ♖xe1† 17.♕xe1 ♕xa4 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6, as in Adamski – Panczyk, Poland (ch) 1987.

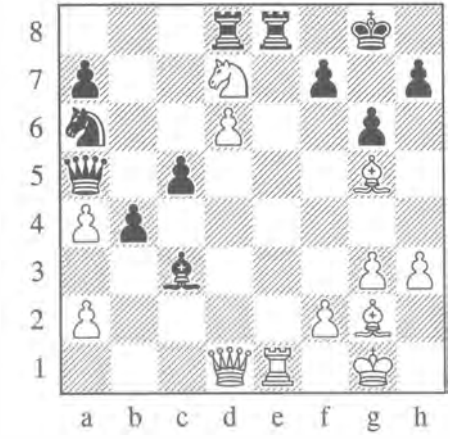
16...♗xa4 17.bxa4 ♘d7

At first sight 17...♘e4 looks attractive for Black, but after 18.♘c6! ♘c3 19.♘xa5 ♘xd1 20.♖xd1 ♗xa1 21.♗e3! ♗d4 22.♗xd4 cxd4 23.d6± White's passed pawn is extremely strong.

18.♘xd7 ♗xa1 19.d6!

White seizes a strong initiative, thanks to his passed d-pawn and Black's misplaced pieces on the queenside. For example:

19...♖ad8 20.♗g5 ♗c3

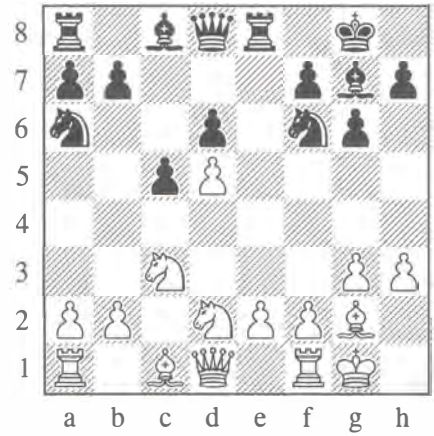


21.♖e7↑

Black is in trouble.

F2) 10...♖e8 11.♘d2

Now this move is essential, as Black intended to play 11...♘e4.



11...♘c7

Another option is:

11...♖b8 12.a4 ♘c7

The natural alternative is 12...♘b4 13.♘c4 ♗f5 (White has a nice edge after 13...a6 14.♗f4 ♗f8 15.a5!) 14.♗f4 ♗c2 15.♕d2 ♗f8. This was played in Gal – Borsi, Hungary 2003, and now after 16.♘e3! ♗b3 17.♖a3 c4 18.♗g5! White has severe pressure, as Black cannot play 18...h6? in view of 19.♗xf6 ♕xf6 20.♘e4+– and Black's knight on b4 is hanging.

13.♘c4 b6 14.♗f4 ♗f8 15.e4 ♗a6



16.b3! ♗xc4

This leaves White with a nice positional advantage, but even after the best 16...♘h5 17.♗e3 ♗g7 18.♖c1± White is firmly in control.

17.bxc4 a6 18.♖b1 ♘d7 19.♖b3!±

White has managed to stop Black only idea on the queenside (...b7-b5) and so White's extra space and the bishop pair makes his edge quite obvious, Roiz – Rechlis, Ashdod 2004.

12.a4 b6 13.e4 ♗a6

The text looks like the most natural move. I also examined:

13...♘h5

And now I believe White's most accurate continuation is:

14.♖e1

With the following ideas:

14...f5

14...♗a6 15.♘f3 is simply better for White.

15.exf5 ♖xe1† 16.♕xe1 ♗xf5

16...gxf5 runs into the unpleasant 17.♘b5! ♘xb5 18.axb5 followed by 19.♘c4, when White is clearly better.



17.♕d1!

White should avoid the complications that ensue after 17.g4 ♘f4 18.gxf5, especially since Black has good play after 18...♘xg2 (but not 18...♕g5?! 19.♕e4! which is better for White) 19.♔xg2 ♕g5† 20.♔h1 ♕xf5∞.

17...♘f6 18.♘c4

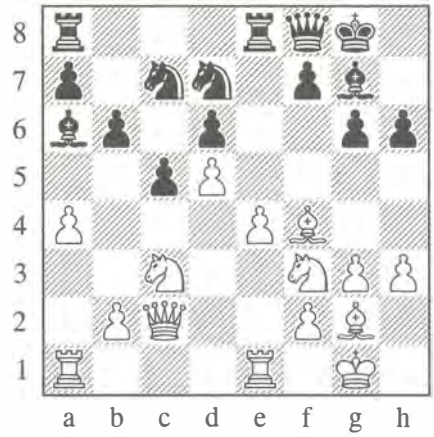
White has a promising position.

14.♖e1 ♘d7 15.♘f3 ♕e7

Another option 15...♘e5, but White has a pleasant edge after 16.♘xe5 ♗xe5 17.♗e3 ♗g7 18.♕d2±, Goldin – Emms, Cappelle la Grande 1992.

16.♗f4 ♕f8 17.♕c2 h6

This complex position arose in Kamsky – Topalov, Dos Hermanas 1996. I believe White should have continued:



18.♖ad1N ♖ad8

White is ready to meet 18...g5 with 19.♗c1.

19.h4±

White's chances are preferable thanks to his space advantage.

F3) 10...♘c7

This is considered to be Black's main choice.

11.e4 ♘d7

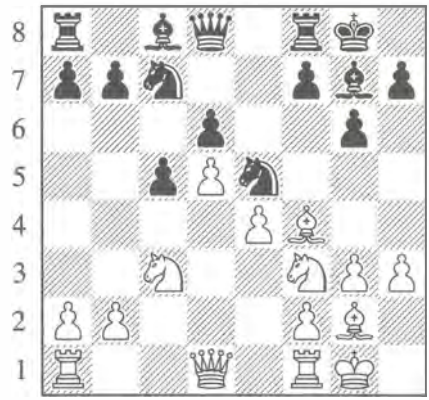
The main move according to theory. Black has also tried: 11...♖e8 12.♖e1 ♘d7 13.♗f4 (13.♗g5!? also comes into consideration) 13...♘e5 14.♘xe5 dxe5 15.♗e3 This was played in Stempin – Gdanski, Poland 1997. I believe that, in general, this type of pawn structure favours White, especially if Black cannot bring his knight to d6 immediately.

12.♗f4

A recent high-level game continued 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗f4 ♘e5 14.a4 g5 15.♗xe5 fxe5 16.♘d2 ♘e8 17.♘c4 ♖f7 18.♘e3 ♘f6 19.♔h2 ♗f8 when Black had a very solid position in Wang Yue – Gashimov, Baku 2008.

12...♘e5

The point of Black's set-up. Other options are quite passive, for example 12...♘e8 13.♕d2± or 12...♕e7 13.♖e1 f6 14.♖b1!, followed by 15.b4, which led to a pleasant edge for White in Csom – Wedberg, Malta (ol) 1980.



13.♗xe5!?N

This is my improvement over 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♗e3 b6 15.f4 ♘e8!. The key idea of Black's plan, as now his knight will land on the ideal blockading square. 16.f5 ♘d6 17.♕c2 ♗d7 White failed to find any advantage in Bacrot – Gashimov, Spain 2007.

13...dxe5 14.♘d2

White's knight comes to c4 in order to exchange Black's blockading knight. I predict the play might continue as follows:

14...♘e8 15.♘c4

Also quite interesting is 15.♕b3 ♘d6 16.♘b5 ♘xb5 17.♕xb5 b6 18.a4±.

15...♘d6 16.♕b3 ♘xc4 17.♕xc4 ♕d6

18.♖fc1±

White has succeeded in exchanging the key black knight. White's chances are better, as he can easily create play on the queenside, with the main idea being transferring his remaining knight to c4.

G) 9...♘bd7



This is an interesting move order, which contains some nuances.

10.a4!

This is a very important moment. After many hours of investigation I realized that it is vital for White to start with this move. Let's check out some of the other possible moves to understand the point. First of all, 10.♗f4 ♕e7 leads to another theoretical tabiya, which is not relevant to our repertoire.

Inaccurate is:

10.h3

In view of:

10...♖e8 11.♘d2 ♘h5!

With the idea of playing ...f7-f5 next; Black will get good play.

12.♘de4

White's problem is that 12.e4 runs into 12...♘e5 (heading for d3) 13.♘f3 ♘xf3† 14.♕xf3 ♘f6 and Black is fine with just one pair of knights on the board.

12...♘df6 13.♘xf6† ♘xf6 14.a4 a6 15.♗d2 ♖b8

Black had easy play in Solozhenkin – Akopian, Rethymnon 2003.

The main point is that 10.♘d2 runs into the same idea: 10...♘h5! And again I could not find a way for White to fight for an advantage. 11.♘de4 ♘df6 12.♘xf6† ♕xf6 (I do not see any problems for Black after the natural 12...♘xf6 either) 13.e4 a6 14.♖e1 And here a draw was agreed in Roiz – Sakaev, Warsaw 2005.

10...♖e8

The same position can be reached after 10...a6 11.♘d2 ♖e8. Other options are:

10...♘e8

This was tried in P. Nikolic – Maze, Budva 2009, but it seems rather passive to me.

11.♗g5

This looks very nice for White with the following variations:

11...f6

Also possible is 11...♗f6 12.♗f4 ♘e5. This is a thematic idea when Black's knight is on e8; after an exchange on e5 it will get a nice square on d6, but in this concrete example White succeeds in seizing the initiative on the queenside. 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♗e3 b6 This position was reached in Hausner – Sikora Lerch, Czech Republic 1999, and now instead of the double-edged 15.d6, I prefer a clean positional decision: 15.a5!?N ♖b8 16.axb6 axb6 17.♕b3! ♗b7 (17...♘d6? would be a mistake in view of 18.♗xc5!) 18.♖a7 ♘d6 19.♖fa1 White has strong pressure on the queenside.

12.♗f4 ♕e7

I believe White should simply play the natural move:

13.e4

In Kuligowski – Spassky, Germany 1987, White chose the less convincing 13.♖e1 b6 14.h4 ♘e5 15.♗xe5 fxe5 with double-edged play.

13...♘e5 14.♕c2±

With Black's dark-squared bishop blocked by the f6-pawn, White should always be better.

In the first round of the Russian league, David Navara surprised me with:

10...b6

This seems to have been a novelty at the time, and no one has repeated it since. Now I believe that White should play:

11.♘d2

Instead I won a nice game after 11.♗f4 ♕e7. Now I employed a tricky idea: 12.♘b5 ♘e8 13.♖a3 This worked perfectly in the game: 13...a6?! 14.♖e3 ♕f6 15.♗g5! ♕xb2 16.♖b3 ♕a2 17.♘c3 ♗xc3 18.♖xc3∞ White had powerful compensation in Avrukh – Navara, Dagomys 2008. But after the correct 13...♘df6! I am not sure if White has anything.

11...♗a6 12.♘b5 ♖e8 13.♖e1

The play would transpose to line C2 (the 9...♖e8, 10...b6 line that we examined earlier).

The position after 10.a4 was seriously tested in the Caruana-Alekseev match during the last World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk:

10...♘g4



This surprising novelty was played twice during the match. Black has two ideas behind his move: firstly, he wants to play ...f7-f5, and secondly he would be happy to exchange one pair of knights, which is a typical thematic idea for Black in this variation.

11.h3

In the first game the Italian grandmaster did not react so strongly: 11.♘d2 And after 11...f5 12.h3 ♘ge5 13.f4 ♘f7 14.e4 ♘f6 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♘c4 h5 17.♘e3 ♘h6! Black equalized comfortably, Caruana – Alekseev, Khanty-Mansiysk (3.1) 2009.

11...♘ge5 12.♘g5!

In the third game Caruana was well-armed and unleashed a powerful plan. It turns out that Black is unable to carry out either of his plans.

12...♕e7

The main point is that after 12...h6 13.♘ge4 ♘f6 White is not obliged to capture on f6, but instead he can simply play 14.♘d2 and it seems to me that White has an improved version of a normal Benoni.

13.f4 ♘c4 14.e4 ♘a5

This is Caruana – Alekseev, Khanty-Mansiysk (3.3) 2009, and now White missed a good chance:

15.e5!N

With the following point:

15...dxe5 16.d6 ♕d8 17.f5

White has powerful compensation for the pawn. For example:

17...gxf5 18.♖xf5 ♘b6 19.♖xf7! ♖xf7 20.♘xf7 ♔xf7 21.♕h5† ♔g8 22.♗e4+–

With a crushing attack.

11.♘d2 a6

This is clearly Black's main choice in the present position. In a few games Black tried:

11...♘e5

Now I recommend:

12.h3

Instead 12.f4 ♘eg4 13.♘c4 ♗f5! looks rather double-edged. For example, 14.h3 ♘h6 15.g4 ♘fxg4 16.hxg4 ♘xg4.

12...♘h5

The critical continuation. Needless to say, Black wants to continue with ...f7-f5.

Another option is 12...g5 when I like the following plan: 13.♕c2 h6 14.b3 ♗d7 15.♗b2 a6 16.♘c4 ♘xc4 17.bxc4 In Reefschlaeger – Ackermann, Menden 1974, White was much better positionally, as he has managed to block Black's play on the queenside, while he has a clear plan of advancing his central pawns.

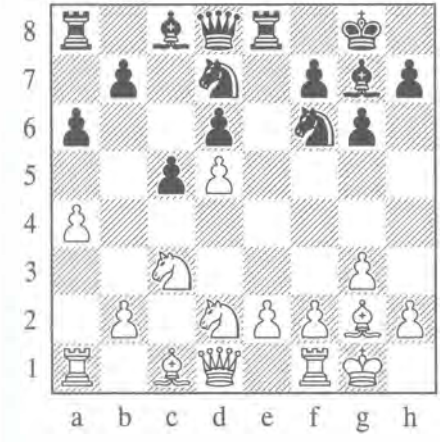
13.f4 ♘xg3 14.fxe5 ♘xf1 15.♕xf1 ♖xe5 16.e4

Although this position may look double-edged at first, I believe White is better as he has a clear plan of putting his knight to c4 followed by ♗f4.

The following encounter supported my evaluation:

16...♗d7 17.♘c4 ♖h5 18.♗f4 ♗d4† 19.♔h2

White was clearly better in Heurtebize – Valentin, France 1997.



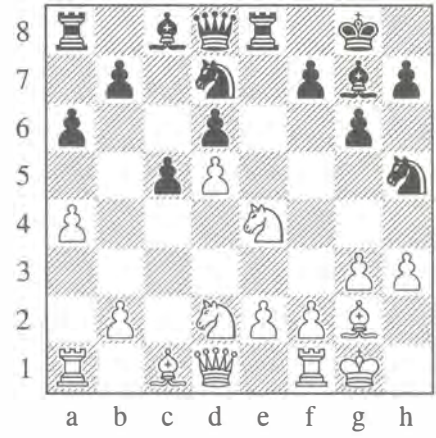
12.h3

An important prophylactic move. It is essential to know that White cannot fight for an advantage with 12.♘c4 because Black has 12...♘e5. 13.♘a3 (or if 13.♘xe5 ♖xe5 and Black is fine, as has been proven by the theorists) 13...♘h5 Black has time to play ...f7-f5 next.

At this point there are two important moves to consider: **G1) 12...♘h5** and **G2) 12...♖b8**.

Less vital is 12...♕c7 as after 13.♘c4 ♘b6 14.♘a3 ♗d7 (14...♘bd7 15.e4 makes no sense for Black) 15.e4 ♖ab8 we will transpose to the line G21 below, the 13...♘b6 variation.

G1) 12...♘h5 13.♘ce4



This is the only way White can fight for the advantage.

13...♘df6 14.♘xf6† ♘xf6

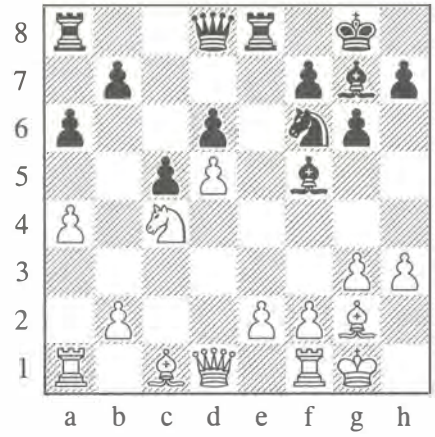
14...♕xf6 15.♘c4 ♗d7 was played in Wright – Vrnata, Nachod 2002, and now I like the simple 16.♘b6N ♖ad8 17.♖a3 ♕e7 18.e4± with a very nice position for White. The weakening of the d4-square is not so relevant, as White can easily meet 18...♗d4 with 19.♖d3! threatening a positional sacrifice with ♖xd4.

15.♘c4

Now with the inclusion of ...a7-a6 and a2-a4 we can play this move, whereas without these moves the text would be met by ...b7-b5.

15...♗f5

Here I developed the following strategic plan.



16.a5!?N

Sooner or later White should make this positional move, fixing Black's pawns on the queenside and thus securing a nice outpost for White's knight on c4.

Before White has tried only 16.♖a3 and 16.♗f4 but failed to achieve anything special.

16...♗e4 17.♗g5!

The point of my plan. My idea is to reach a favourable position with White's knight versus Black's dark-squared bishop. Although this move has never been tested in practice, I discovered later that it was suggested by Nogueiras in *Informant* 52. The play might continue like this:

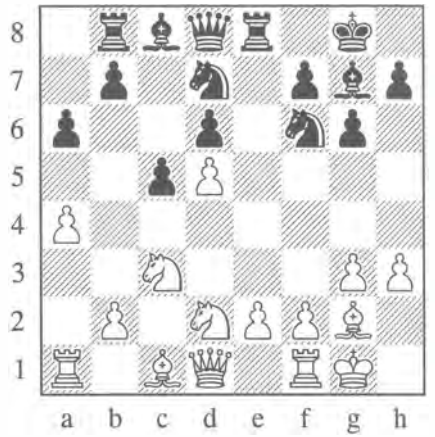
17...h6 18.♗xf6 ♕xf6 19.♗xe4 ♖xe4 20.♕c2 ♖ae8 21.e3 h5 22.♖a4!

Creating the tactical threat of 23.♘xd6.

22...♖4e7 23.h4!

White has a stable positional advantage, thanks to his strong knight.

G2) 12...♖b8



This is clearly Black's main choice.

13.♘c4

I believe this is White's best try.

Instead 13.a5 brings White nothing as the following recent example illustrates: 13...b5 14.axb6 ♘xb6 15.♕c2 a5 16.e4 ♗a6 17.♖d1 ♘c4 Black achieved good counterplay in Sargissian – Damljanovic, France 2008.

After the text move we reach an important crossroads for Black. He has two knight moves that usually lead to very different kinds of play: **G21) 13...♘b6** and **G22) 13...♘e5**.

G21) 13...♘b6

This leads to more positional play than 13...♘e5.

14.♘a3

Certainly White has no intention of trading one pair of knights; in fact, he is planning to drive away Black's knight from b6 with a4-a5, and then return his own knight to the excellent c4-square.

I will mention in passing that White cannot play 14.♘xd6? in view of 14...♕xd6 15.♗f4 ♖e5!.



14...♗d7

Besides the text, we should examine two other options for Black:

14...♗f5

Black takes control over the e4-square, inviting White to weaken his kingside with g3-g4.

15.a5

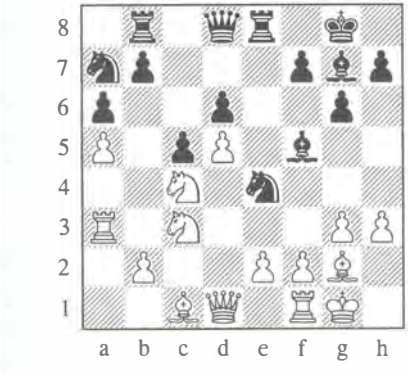
This looks the most natural choice to me.

15...♘c8 16.♘c4 ♘e4

As usual, 16...b5 is met strongly by 17.axb6 ♘xb6 18.♘a5.

17.♖a3 ♘a7

This position was reached in Avrukh – Megaranto, Turin (ol) 2006, and now I have found an obvious improvement over the inaccurate 18.♖b3 that I actually played.



18.♘xe4!N ♗xe4 19.f3 ♗f5 20.e4 ♗c8 21.f4 ♘b5 22.♖d3

White has everything one could dream of when facing the Benoni.

14...♘a8

This is actually not as stupid as it may seem at first glance. Black's knight is heading for c7, where it will either support ...b7-b5, or jump out to b5 if White plays a4-a5.

15.e4 ♘c7

In my opinion it is now logical to recentralize the a3-knight:



16.♘c4!?N

Surprisingly, this is a novelty. In all eight games where this position was reached White chose 16.a5, when I think a very strong reply is 16...♘b5!, which leads to good play for Black. I was claiming 16...♘b5 as my novelty until a Czech called Turner played it on January 20, 2010!

16...b5 17.axb5

Less convincing is 17.♘a5 ♗d7.

17...♘xb5

Or 17...axb5 18.♘a5 with the main point that after 18...♗d7 White can play 19.♘c6! ♗xc6 20.dxc6 and not worry about losing the e4-pawn, as after 20...b4 21.♘d5 ♘xe4 22.♖a7 ♖c8 23.♖e1 White has powerful play for the pawn.

18.♖e1 ♘d4 19.♗e3±

White has the better chances, thanks to his space advantage.

15.e4

This is more flexible than 15.a5 ♘c8 16.♘c4 ♗b5 17.♕b3 ♗xc4 18.♕xc4 ♘d7 when Black has scored well from this position.

This is a very important moment. Black usually chooses between **G211) 15...♘c8** and **G212) 15...♕c7**. A third option will also be considered briefly, but it is a less serious line.

15...♘xa4 16.♘xa4



16...♘xe4

Certainly Black can easily regain the piece by 16...b5 17.♘xc5 dxc5, but this has been played only once in tournament practice. Now White could play the simple 18.♖e1!N (instead of 18.e5 ♖xe5 19.♗f4 ♘h5 20.♗xe5 ♗xe5⩲ which gave Black excellent compensation in Levy – Hulak, Dornbirn 1988). White's strong centre gives him a clear edge. For example, 18...b4 19.♘c4 ♗b5 20.♘a5 ♘d7 21.f4 and White is ready to advance his central pawns, while Black's counterplay has failed to develop.

After the text move I believe the best answer is:

17.♕c2!?N

In E. Atalik – Marzolo, Sousse 2007, White opted for 17.♘c4, and now it is not clear to me why Black avoided 17...b5 with the following point: 18.♘xd6 ♘xd6 19.♘xc5 a5! 20.♘xd7 ♖c8 Black retains equal chances.

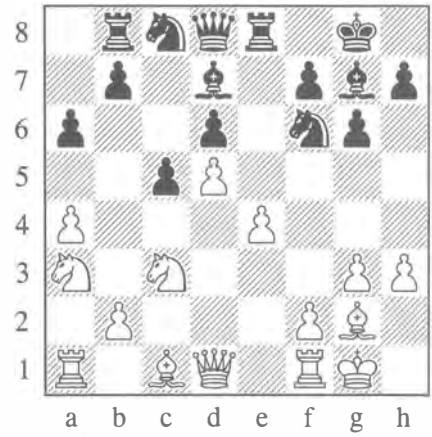
17...♘f6

17...b5 can be discounted. After doing my own work I noticed that Watson had already analysed this in *The Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*. His line goes: 18.♗xe4 ♗xh3 19.♗g2 ♗xg2 20.♔xg2 bxa4 21.♘c4 Here he says White is a bit better, which is slightly inaccurate, as White is of course completely winning.

18.♘c3 b5 19.♘e2

It seems to me that Black's two pawns are not enough to compensate for the piece.

G211) 15...♘c8



16.♕d3

Usually Black opts for 16...♕c7, which can transpose to the 15...♕c7 line after 17.♖e1, but also gives White an additional option of 17.♗e3, but Black has another possible 16th move:

16...b5

This pawn sacrifice is in Benko Gambit style.

17.axb5 axb5 18.♘axb5 ♗xb5 19.♘xb5 ♘d7

I believe Black does not have enough compensation for the missing pawn. The following example is quite illustrative.

20.♕e2

20.♘c3 is another option that is worthy of consideration.

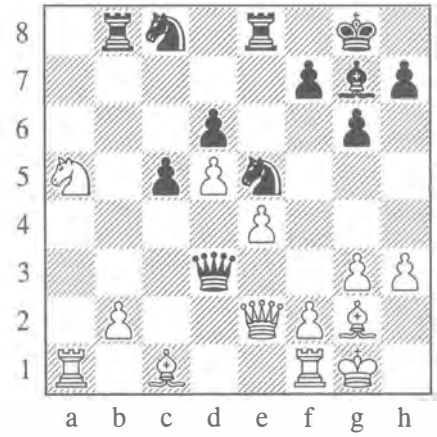
20...♕b6 21.♘a3!

White's knight is heading for c4.

21...♕b3 22.♘c4 ♘e5

Black is clearly worse after 22...f5 23.♖a3 ♕b5 24.♕c2 fxe4 25.♗xe4±.

23.♘a5 ♕d3



24.♕d1!

A strong positional decision; White is not going to allow Black's knight to land on d3.

24...♖a8 25.♖a3 ♕b5 26.♖b3 ♕a4 27.♖a3 ♕b5 28.♖b3 ♕a4 29.♘c6!

After repeating the position just to gain time on the clock, White plays on and was clearly better in Avrukh – Gashimov, Athens 2005. However, as usually happens in this line, Black still has some tactical tricks.

G212) 15...♕c7 16.♖e1

Only White's second most popular choice.

16.♗e3

This is considered to be the main choice. In fact Black has great play after the following tactical operation.

16...♘xa4! 17.♘xa4 ♘xe4

The difference compared to 15...♘xa4 is that now Black has the additional threat of 18...♘xg3. The following consequences look pretty forced.

18.♘c2 b5 19.♘c3 ♘xc3 20.bxc3

Now Black has a strong punch:

20...a5!

The text is better than creating unclear play with 20...♗xc3 21.♖xa6 b4 22.♗f4.

21.♗d2 b4

Black is probably a bit better, although the position is generally just messy. White was lucky to escape with a draw in Pantsulaia – Bagaturov, Batumi 2001.

16...♘c8

Again Black has the option of:

16...♘xa4 17.♘xa4 b5

White has to regain the pawn by means of:

18.♘xc5 ♕xc5

Certainly not 18...dxc5? which allows 19.♗f4.

19.♗e3

I believe White has very pleasant play, for example:

19...♕c8 20.♖c1 ♕b7 21.♗d4 ♖bc8

Now White might improve on existing theory with:



22.♘c2!?N

It is natural to improve the position of White's worst-placed piece. In the game

White played 22.b4, but after 22...♖xc1 23.♕xc1 ♖c8 24.♕d2 ♘e8∞ Black had a reasonable position in Akopian – Yudasin, Lvov 1990.

22...b4 23.♕d2 b3

The point is that 23...a5 runs into 24.♕f4! and Black loses material.

24.♘a3 ♖xc1 25.♕xc1

White keeps a pleasant advantage, thanks to his better pawn structure.

17.♕d3

It almost goes without saying that White has to stop the ...b7-b5 advance.

17...♘a7

In my opinion 17...b5 is inferior, as Black does not gain sufficient compensation after: 18.axb5 c4 19.♕xc4 (if 19.♘xc4 then 19...axb5 20.♘d2 b4 21.♘e2 ♗b5⩲ and Black gets some play) 19...♕xc4 20.♘xc4 axb5 And now White should play the simple: 21.♘d2!N (instead 21.♘xd6 ♘xd6 22.♗f4 ♗f8 23.♖a6 b4 was unclear in Jirka – Simacek, Prerov 2001) 21...b4 (or 21...♘b6 22.♖a7 b4 23.♘e2±) 22.♘e2±

18.♘c4 b5

Of course 18...♘c8 looks very strange, but actually Black is renewing his main idea of ...b7-b5. 19.a5 ♗b5 20.b3! A very important positional decision; now White is ready to recapture with a pawn on c4. Cu. Hansen – S.B. Hansen, Koge 2005, continued 20...♘d7 21.f4 b6 22.axb6 ♘cxb6 23.♗d2 ♘f6 24.♔h2 and White had a stable positional edge.

19.axb5 ♘xb5 20.♗d2

Now the following series of moves looks pretty logical.

20...♘xc3 21.♗xc3 ♗b5 22.b3!

Once again we see this well known positional idea; White will recapture with the b-pawn in the event of a capture on c4.

22...♘d7 23.♗xg7 ♔xg7 24.♕c3† ♔g8 25.♘a5

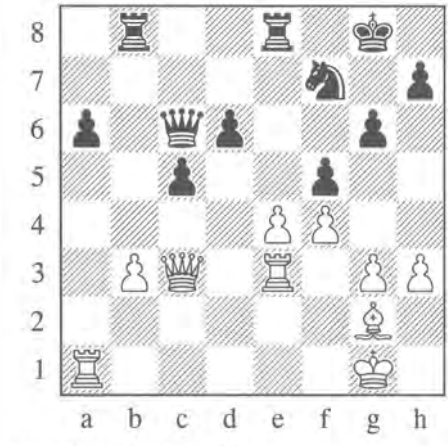
White has a clear positional advantage and the following example supports my assessment.

25...♘e5 26.♖e3

Worthy of consideration is 26.f4 ♘d3 27.♖e3 ♘b4 28.e5 with an advantage.

26...f5 27.f4 ♘f7 28.♘c6! ♗xc6 29.dxc6 ♕xc6

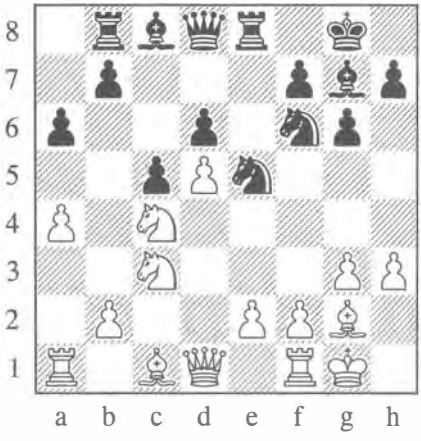
This was played in Cernousek – Terekhov, Bavaria 2008, and now we have a simple novelty.



30.exf5N ♖xe3 31.♕xe3±

White has a clear advantage.

G22) 13...♘e5



In my opinion this is a critical continuation that leads to very sharp play.

14.♘a3

As usual, the trade of one pair of knights (by 14.♘xe5 ♖xe5) leads to a comfortable game for Black. Now we have reached the first crossroads in this complicated line.

Black can now play **G221) 14...♕c7?!**, **G222) 14...c4**, **G223) 14...♗d7** and **G224) 14...♘h5**.

G221) 14...♕c7?!

This is dubious as it allows White to get everything he is dreaming of:

15.f4 ♘ed7 16.e4



16...c4

Of course, as always in Benoni-type positions, Black has some counter-chances.

17.♗e3 ♘c5

Let's see some of the other moves that have been tested in practice:

17...♘h5 18.♔h2 I prefer this move, as White keeps an important option of driving Black's knight away with g3-g4. (Instead Gonzalez Zamora – Polugaevsky, Havana 1962, continued 18.♗f2 ♘c5 19.e5 ♘d3 and Black had good counterplay.) 18...♘c5 (I also examined 18...f5 19.♕e2 fxe4 20.♘xc4 and White's forces are much better coordinated.) 19.g4 ♘f6 20.e5± Black is already in serious trouble.

17...♘xe4 18.♘xe4 f5

This is a thematic idea for Black in the Benoni, but in this case White can easily prove his superiority:



19.♘xd6!N

In Cernousek – Arakhamia-Grant, Sunningdale 2007, Black obtained reasonable play after 19.♘g5 ♖xe3 20.♘e6 ♖xe6 21.dxe6 ♘f6 22.♘xc4 d5.

19...♖xe3 20.♘axc4 ♖xg3 21.♕e1! ♖xg2† 22.♔xg2 ♘f6 23.♕e5!

White is clearly better, as Black does not have compensation for the exchange.

18.e5 dxe5? 19.d6 ♕a5 20.fxe5 ♘fd7 21.♕d5+–

White quickly won in Korsus – Friedrich, Bad Zwischenahn 2006.

G222) 14...c4

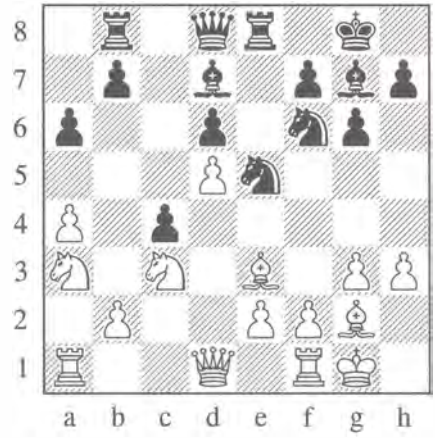
A rare move, introduced by the talented Polish Grandmaster Gajewski against the author of this book. Still, I do not see any justification for losing control of the d4-square.

15.♗e3!

White immediately takes control over the e3-a7 diagonal and especially the d4-square. White should not accept the pawn sacrifice with 15.f4 ♘ed7 16.♘xc4?!, as this would allow Black fantastic compensation after 16...b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.♘d2 ♘c5.

15...♗d7

Now I have found a very interesting solution.



16.♗a7!N

Before placing his bishop on d4 White intends to divert Black's rook from supporting the ...b7-b5 advance.

In the game I played less convincingly and after 16.♘c2 b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.♘b4 ♕c8∞ Black had counterplay on the kingside in Avrukh – Gajewski, Dresden 2007.

16.a5 ♕c8 17.g4 h5 18.g5 ♗xh3 leads to equality, and shows once again that Black has plans on the kingside as well as the usual ...b7-b5 idea.

16...b5

This looks principled, but it does not work. However, the other options also leave White with a clear positional plus.

After 16...♖a8 17.♗d4 the idea of 18.f4 is very unpleasant, and the c4-pawn is also hanging. 17...♘h5 18.♔h2 g5 19.♗xe5! ♗xe5 20.♘xc4± and White has a healthy extra pawn.

After 16...♖c8 17.f4 ♘h5 18.fxe5 ♗xe5 19.g4 ♘g3 20.♖f3 Black is far from having sufficient compensation for his missing piece.

17.axb5 axb5 18.♗xb8

Less clear is 18.f4 ♘eg4 19.hxg4 ♘xg4 and Black has some play.

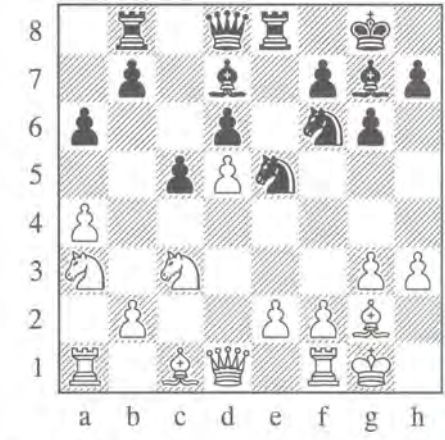
18...♕xb8 19.b4

Black hardly has compensation for the exchange, with the following important point:

19...cxb3 20.♕xb3 b4 21.♖ab1±

Black's play is not serious, though some accuracy is required from White.

G223) 14...♗d7



15.f4 ♘h5

15...b5 is easily refuted by 16.axb5 axb5 17.fxe5 ♖xe5 (even worse is 17...♘h5 18.e6! fxe6 19.♘e4 and White has a winning position) 18.♗f4 b4 19.♘c4 bxc3 20.bxc3± and Black cannot avoid losing material.

16.fxe5 ♗xe5

And now the easiest would be:

17.g4

17.♗f4 should also be enough for an advantage.

17...♘g3

Now I recommend that White save his rook.



18.♖f3!?

Instead the sacrificial 18.♗f4 ♘xf1 19.♕xf1 b5 was very unclear in Payen – Gayer, Cappelle la Grande 2005.

18...b5

Another option is 18...♕h4 19.♗e3 h5 20.gxh5 and Black's attack falls short after 20...♗xh3 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♗f2 ♗g4 23.♘e4 ♗xf3 24.exf3 with a material advantage.

19.axb5 axb5 20.♕e1 b4

I also examined 20...f5 21.♗f4 ♗xc3 22.♕xg3 ♗xb2 23.♖b1 when Black does not have sufficient compensation for being a piece down.

21.♖xg3 bxc3 22.♖xc3

White is clearly better.

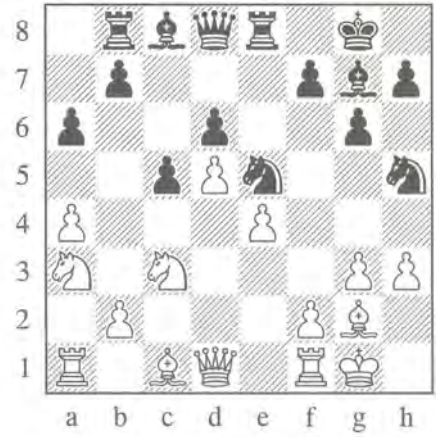
G224) 14...♘h5

This is by far Black's most important choice.

15.e4

The best and most principled continuation; other moves do not pose Black any problems. For example, 15.f4 ♘xg3 16.fxe5 ♗xe5! and Black has good attacking chances.

After the text move we reach a critical position of the whole line. Black has to decide which sharp line he wants to try.



Black has three big moves up his sleeve. They are **G2241) 15...♗d7**, **G2242) 15...♖f8** and **G2243) 15...f5**.

G2241) 15...♗d7

The text is Black's most common choice in the present position, and has recently become even more popular thanks to the game Avrukh – Kamsky from the 2007 World Cup.

16.a5!

This is White's only chance of fighting for the advantage. With this pawn sacrifice White tries to distract Black's queen from the kingside, and especially the h4-square, in order to start pushing his pawns there. Neither 16.f4 ♘xg3, nor 16.g4 b5! promises White any favourable chances.

16...♕xa5

The alternative

16...b5

seems worse to me.

17.axb6 ♖xb6

Black failed to obtain serious compensation after 17...♗b5 18.♘axb5 axb5 19.♘xb5 ♕xb6 20.♘a3 c4 21.♔h2 in Anastasian – Gopal, Abu Dhabi 2007.



18.f4!N

In my opinion this is a serious improvement over White's play in the following two games:

18.♔h2 was tested in Civin – Nokes, New Zealand 2006, but it is too slow. Black could achieve a good game after 18...♗b5 19.♘axb5 axb5 20.f4 ♘c4.

18.g4?! allows Black to develop a dangerous attack after 18...♕h4! 19.gxh5 (simply bad is 19.♖e1? ♗xg4 20.hxg4 ♘xg4 21.♕f3 as in Payen – Sanglan, Avoine 2004, and here it's a mystery why Black did not find the primitive 21...♗d4 22.♗e3 ♖xb2 and White's position collapses) 19...♗xh3 20.♕e2 ♘g4 21.♗f4 ♗e5!.

The play might continue:

18...♘xg3 19.♖f2!

The point. Black is fine after 19.fxe5 ♘xf1 20.♗xf1 (20.♕xf1 runs into 20...♗xe5 21.♘c4 ♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♗b5!∓) 20...♗xe5 21.♘c4 ♗d4† 22.♔h1 ♖b4 and Black has great play.



Now I investigated the following lines:

19...♘g4

19...♕h4? does not work due to 20.fxe5 ♗xh3 21.♕f3 and White wins.

It is also hard to believe Black has sufficient play for the sacrificed piece after 19...♖b4 20.fxe5 ♗xe5 21.♘c2.

20.hxg4 ♗xc3 21.bxc3 ♘xe4 22.♗xe4

Probably we have to give up our bishop, as 22.♖a2 runs into 22...♗a4.

22...♖xe4 23.g5!

Not allowing the queen to jump to h4. Black has insufficient compensation for the piece.

17.g4 ♘f6

17...b5 has been tried only once and indeed after 18.gxh5 b4 19.♘c2 ♕d8 20.♘e2 Black's compensation was rather questionable in Luyks – Pinheiro, Lisbon 2002.



18.f4

In my opinion this is the only way for White to fight for an advantage and this is the move I opted for in my most recent game.

I had previously tried:

18.g5

But I was hit by a strong novelty. The curious point is that I had already discovered this move by myself a few years before. The explanation is quite simple – I simply forgot the right move.

18...♘h5 19.f4 ♘c4!

This is the only way, as other moves are favourable for White.

20.♘xc4 ♕xa1 21.♘xd6



21...♗xc3!

Very simple and very strong! Before this game the position had occurred only three times in tournament practice, and had been considered slightly risky for Black. This game completely changed the assessment of this line.

The old main line according to the theory was 21...♗d4† 22.♔h2 ♖e7 with double-edged play, Hulak – Nunn, Toluca 1982.

22.bxc3 ♕xc3

The game continued:

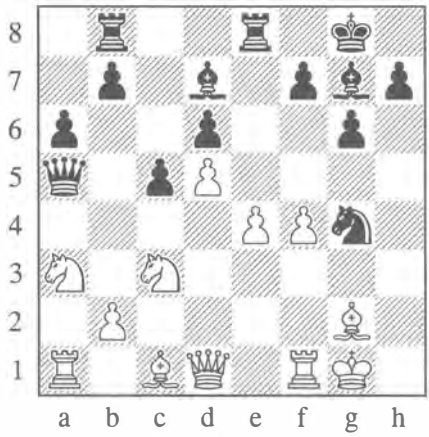
23.♘xe8 ♖xe8 24.♖f3 ♕d4† 25.♕xd4 cxd4 26.♖d3 ♖c8 27.♗d2 a5

And it was White who had to fight for a draw in Avrukh – Kamsky, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007.

18...♘exg4

Now the same idea that Black used against 18.g5 no longer works: 18...♘c4 19.♘xc4 ♕xa1 20.e5! and Black is in trouble.

19.hxg4 ♘xg4



20.f5!

A very important move that significantly improves White's play compared with previous encounters. White destroys the connection between Black's minor pieces, opens the diagonal for his dark-squared bishop and, most importantly, creates some active ideas on the kingside. The previously played lines (20.♘c2, 20.♕f3 and 20.♗f3) have scored disastrously for White.

20...♘e5

The critical line of course is:

20...♗d4† 21.♔h1 ♘f2† 22.♖xf2 ♗xf2 23.♗g5!

Not allowing Black's queen to be transferred via d8-square to h4.

Now I examined the following line:

23...♗d4 24.♘c4 ♕b4

After the passive 24...♕c7 25.♗f4 ♗e5 26.♕d2 White develops his initiative on the kingside.

25.♕e2

White's main idea is to win the d6-pawn.

After 25.♗f1 Black has an interesting idea at his disposal: 25...b5! 26.♘a2 ♕xc4 27.♗xc4 bxc4∓ and strangely enough Black has good compensation for his material deficit.

25...f6

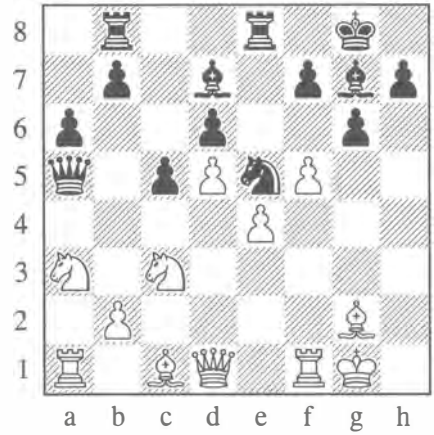
If 25...♗xc3 26.bxc3 ♕xc3 27.♖c1 ♕g3 28.♕e3 ♕xe3 29.♗xe3 and the d6-pawn is falling, so White retains the advantage.

26.♗f4 ♗e5

Black has defended his d6-pawn, but in return he must give up his dark-squared bishop.

27.♘xe5 dxe5 28.♗e3

Finally we have reached a very complex position where both sides have their pluses. Still, I believe White's chances should be preferred, as he has good chances to develop an initiative on the kingside using the fact that Black's queen is somewhat out of play.



21.f6!?N

This is my new idea, which might improve on the following game: 21.♗g5 h6 22.♘c4 ♕b4 23.♘xe5 ♗xe5 with very complex play in Avrukh – Bar, Israeli League 2008.

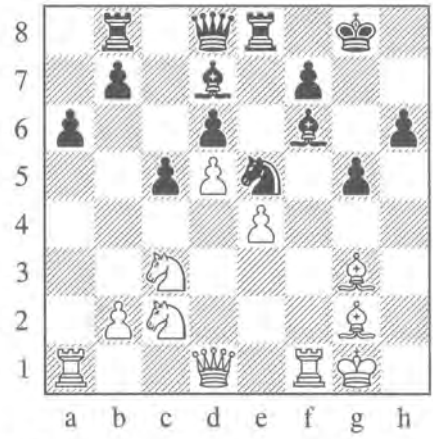
21...♗h8 22.♗g5

Now Black's dark-squared bishop is temporarily out of play.

22...♕d8 23.♘c2

This is the critical position for the assessment of my new idea. Despite retaining material equality, Black faces a tough choice – either to play without his dark-squared bishop or to get it into play at the cost of weakening his kingside.

23...h6 24.♗h4 g5 25.♗g3 ♗xf6



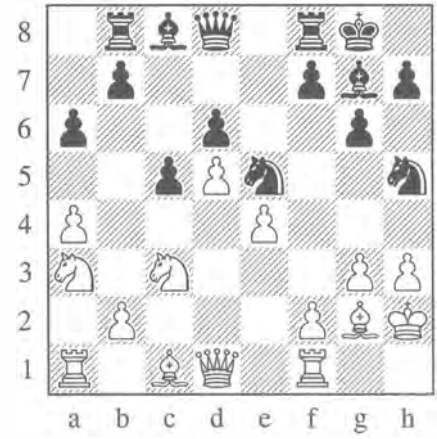
26.♘e3±

White keeps control and has a slight edge.

G2242) 15...♖f8

This tricky move is well-known since the famous game Korchnoi – Kasparov, Lucerne (ol) 1982. Black wants to play ...f7-f5 on the next move.

16.♔h2



This is considered to be White's best bet. It is very difficult to access the position after 16.g4 ♕h4 17.gxh5 ♗xh3, but I have a feeling that Black has enough attacking resources to fully compensate for his material deficit.

After the text move Black has two main replies: **G22421) 16...♗d7** and **G22422) 16...f5**.

G22421) 16...♗d7 17.♕e2

An important prophylactic move; White takes control over the b5-square while at the same time improving the position of his queen. Very unclear is 17.f4 b5 18.fxe5 ♘xg3! as in Ross – O'Donnell, Canada 1986.

17...f5 18.f4



18...fxe4

Black has yet to test the following move over the board:

18...♘f7

However, I decided to analyse this line, as White can easily drift into trouble if he is not careful.

19.exf5 ♖e8 20.♕d1!N

This is a good square for the queen, because in the following line, 20.♕f3 b5N (varying from S.M. Larsen – Schnabel, corr. 2003, where Black played 20...♘f6) 21.axb5 axb5 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♘c2 b4 24.♘e4 ♗f5!, White starts to experience definite problems because his knight is undefended on c2.

20...b5 21.axb5 axb5 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♘c2 ♘f6

If Black continues the same way as he did after 20.♕f3, with 23...b4 24.♘e4 ♗f5, White can comfortably play 25.♘f2±, as his queen defends the c2-knight.

24.♖e1 ♖xe1 25.♕xe1

Black has some activity, but it can hardly compensate for his pawn deficit.

18...♖e8

This simply does not work.

19.fxe5 ♘xg3 20.♔xg3 ♗xe5† 21.♔f2 ♕h4†

And now instead of the incredible 22.♔e3, as was played in Robert – Ballmann, Zurich 1983, White has a clear defence:

22.♔g1 ♕g3 23.♖f2 b5 24.axb5 axb5 25.♕f3 ♕h2† 26.♔f1 b4 27.♗h1 ♕g3 28.♕xg3 ♗xg3 29.♖f3

White remains a piece up.

19.fxe5

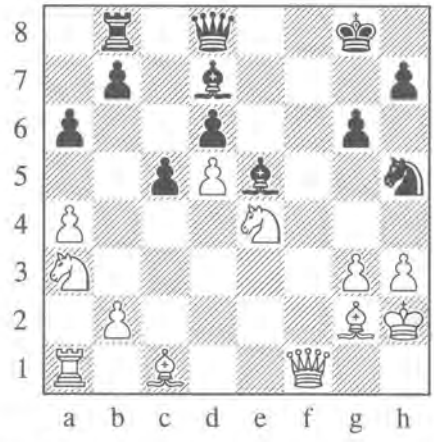
I believe this is the critical continuation, although it has been played only once.

The main move is considered to be 19.♗xe4, but I feel that Black has very rich play here. Let's have a look at the most recent example: 19...♘f7 20.g4 Probably this is already bad for White. 20...♘f6 21.♗f3 b5! 22.axb5 axb5 23.♘axb5 ♖e8 24.♕d3 c4 25.♕xc4 ♘xg4† 26.hxg4 ♕h4† 27.♔g2 ♗xg4 Black easily developed a decisive attack in Solozhenkin – Kornev, St Petersburg 2005.

19...♖xf1 20.♕xf1 ♗xe5

Instead 20...♘xg3 does not work due to 21.♕e1! ♗xe5 22.♘c4 ♘f1† 23.♔g1 ♗d4† 24.♔h1 and White wins.

21.♘xe4



21...♘xg3!

This is the only way to continue the initiative. Instead 21...♗f5 is neatly refuted by 22.♘c4 ♗xe4 23.♘xe5 ♗xg2 24.♕f7† ♔h8 25.♘g4 ♗e4 26.♗d2 with a winning attack.

22.♘xg3 ♕h4 23.♕e1 ♖e8

This position occurred in Symersky – Fiala, Czech Republic 2000. Usually it is not my business to improve Black's play, but here I have to mention an incredible resource:

23...♖f8!?

Now Black is threatening 24...♗xh3! 25.♗xh3 ♖f3 with decisive threats; despite being two pieces up, White has only one defence!

24.♗e3 ♗xh3 25.♗xh3 ♖f1

Now 25...♖f3 does not work in view of 26.♗f2! so Black has to try another idea.

26.♗g5!

The following line looks quite forced:

26...♖xe1

26...♗xg3† 27.♔g2! ♕xh3† 28.♔xh3 ♗xe1 29.♘c4 is winning for White.

27.♗xh4 ♖xa1 28.♘c4

White's material advantage should tell.

In the game, after 23...♖e8, White missed an easy solution:

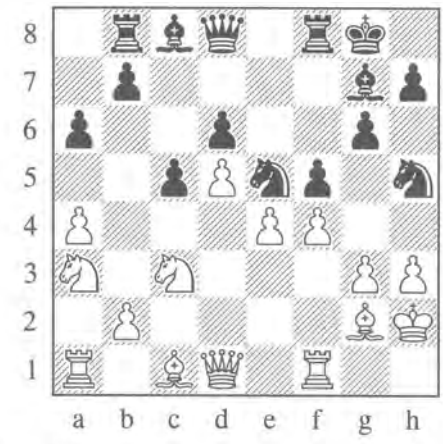
24.♕e3

Threatening 25.♕g5.

24...♗xb2 25.♕xe8† ♗xe8 26.♗xb2

With a clear advantage.

G22422) 16...f5 17.f4



17...b5!?

Let's have a quick look at Black's alternatives:

17...♘f7? is not an option in view of 18.exf5 and Black cannot recapture with the bishop because of 19.g4.

17...fxe4

This is also incorrect, as White can take the piece:

18.fxe5!N

18.♘xe4 ♘f7 19.♘c4 was only slightly better for White in the game Ki. Georgiev – Alexakis, Corfu 1991.

18...♗xe5 19.♘xe4 ♖xf1 20.♕xf1 ♗f5

Amusingly, we have transposed to a position that has been examined in the line 16...♗d7 17.♕e2. Just as a reminder, White has a clear advantage, as the following line does not work for Black:

21.♘c4 ♗xe4 22.♘xe5 ♗xg2 23.♕f7† ♔h8 24.♘g4 ♗e4 25.♗d2+–

Black has also tried:

17...♗d7 18.exf5!

This is the correct move, as after 18.fxe5 ♗xe5 Black has definite play.

18...♗xf5

White can surely accept the piece sacrifice:



19.fxe5!N

Instead the dubious 19.♘e2?! ♘d3! handed the advantage to Black in V. Mikhalevski – Ly, Sydney 2007.

19...♗xe5

19...♘xg3 does not work due to 20.♖f3! ♗xe5 21.♘c4+–.

20.♘e2±

I could not discover anything special for Black here.

18.axb5

18.fxe5?! ♘xg3! has been considered very unclear since the old game Birnboim – Arnason, Randers 1982.

18...axb5 19.♘axb5

The critical continuation. Once again 19.fxe5 ♘xg3! offers Black good play, with a fine example being Van Wely – Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2002,which ended in a brilliant win for Black.

19...fxe4

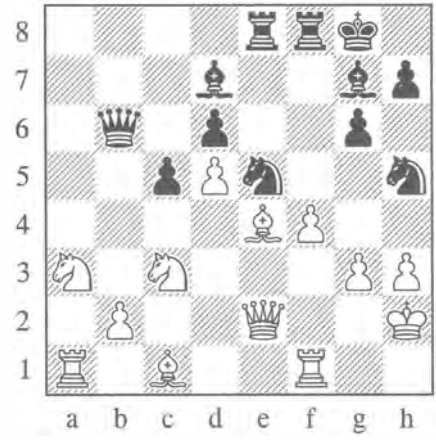
19...♗d7? was played in the game Lacrosse – Piceu, Gent 2000. White could simply grab the important pawn with 20.♘xd6!N and have a winning position, for example: 20...♘xg3 21.♔xg3 ♕b6 22.♘xf5 gxf5 23.♔h2+–

20.♗xe4

This is White's main move according to theory. However, also worthy of consideration is 20.♘a7!? which has been played three times. I decided to reject this move in favour of the natural 20.♗xe4, but at first sight 20.♘a7 also offers White reasonable chances of an advantage.

20...♗d7 21.♕e2 ♕b6 22.♘a3 ♖be8

The alternative 22...♕d8 was tested in a German correspondence game Kiupel – Juelich, corr. 1991, but it does not look sensible to me. White can play by analogy with the main line with 23.♕g2 ♘f7 24.♘c4 ♖b4 25.♗d3, when Black has insufficient compensation for his missing pawn.



23.♕g2!

This is a well known improvement over Korchnoi – Kasparov, Lucerne (ol) 1982, which continued 23.♗d2? ♕xb2! 24.fxe5? ♗xe5 25.♘c4 ♘xg3!–+ and ended in a beautiful win for Black.

In his book *The Modern Benoni Revealed* Richard Palliser suggests that Timman must have had an improvement, since he risked going into this line in his game against Van Wely.

However, Palliser does not suggest anything himself, nor have I found any improvements for Black. I find Palliser's comment a little strange, at it seems to me that White has many ways to claim an advantage, so Black would need a whole cascade of improvements.

It might be that Timman was relying mainly on his opponent's youth, hoping he had not studied the history of this line. It would not be the first time an experienced grandmaster bluffed in this way.

23...♘f7

Black has tried a range of alternatives:

23...c4? was played in Lacrosse – Piceu, Gent 2000. (Actually, the same players seem to have reached this position twice in Gent in 2000!) And now 24.g4! would have won on the spot: 24...♘f6 25.fxe5 ♘xe4 26.♘xc4! with a decisive advantage.

23...g5? was Burger – Bergmann, Reykjavik 1984, and also loses after 24.fxe5N ♖xf1 25.♘c4!.

23...♕b3

This is more serious.

24.♖b1!

I like this calm prophylactic move. White defends the b2-pawn and is ready to develop his queen's bishop. It appears that Black cannot create further threats.

Instead, accepting the piece sacrifice is far from clear: 24.fxe5 ♖xf1 25.♕xf1 ♗xe5 26.♕c4 ♗xg3† 27.♔g2 ♕b4!∓

24...♘f7

Unfortunately for Black, 24...♘c4? does not work: 25.♗c2 ♕b4 26.♘a2 ♕a5 27.♘xc4 ♕xa2 28.♘xd6 and White remains two pawns up.

25.♗d2 ♘f6

This was played in Hechler – Kaiser, corr. 1994, and now White could have executed his main positional idea of getting his knight to c4:

26.♗c2! ♕b7

If 26...♕b4? then 27.♘cb5 and Black's queen is trapped on b4.

27.♘c4

White has a healthy extra pawn.

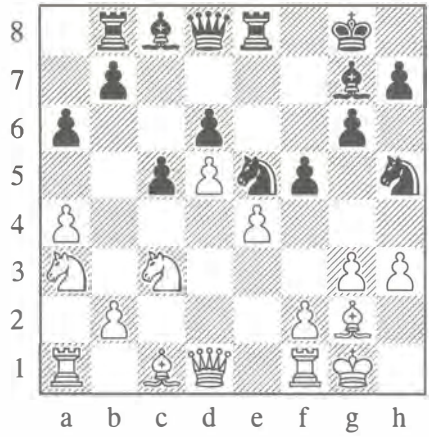
24.g4

Also good enough is 24.♘c4 ♕b4 25.♗d3±.

24...♘f6 25.♘c4 ♕b4 26.♗d3 ♔h8 27.♗d2±

Black failed to obtain any compensation for the pawn in Pietila – Issakainen, Finland 1982.

G2243) 15...f5

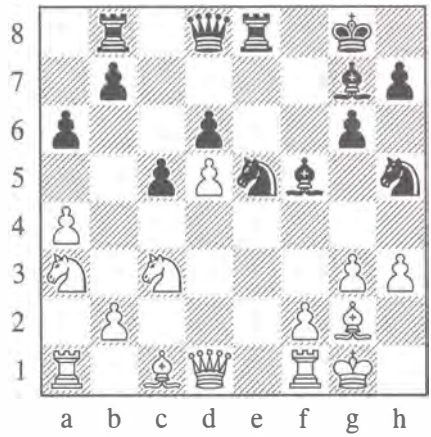


This is probably the oldest move in this position. It was employed by one of the biggest Benoni experts, Kapengut, in 1971 and has undeservedly been forgotten by theory. To make up for this, I will play close attention to it.

16.exf5

This is the critical continuation. Another option is 16.♖e1, which leads to a complicated game with mutual chances.

16...♗xf5



17.g4 ♗xg4 18.hxg4 ♕h4

This is Black's only idea in this position.

19.gxh5 ♖f8!

Again the only move; Black has to take the f4-square under control, and at the same time he creates the powerful threat of ...♘g4. We have an incredible position, where despite being two pieces up it is not easy for White to deal with Black's idea without giving back a significant part of his material advantage.

It is obvious that Black cannot play 19...♘g4 20.♗f4 ♗e5 21.♕f3! ♘h2 22.♕g3 and Black was completely lost in Granda Zuniga – Gruenfeld, Spain 2006.

20.h6

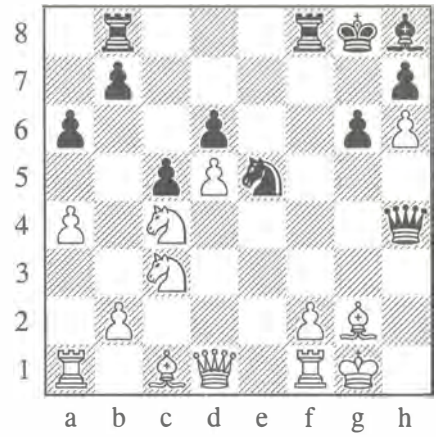
It is useful for White to insert the following moves.

20...♗h8

I barely need to mention that Black is lost after 20...♘g4 21.♕xg4 ♕xg4 22.hxg7.

21.♘c4!

White is ready to give up his knight to disrupt Black's coordination. White can reach the same position via a different move order with 21.♘e4 ♘g4 22.♕xg4 ♕xg4 23.♘c4 and so on.



21...♘g4

Black cannot capture the knight, as after 21...♘xc4? 22.♕d3! White's queen transfers to h3 and kills Black's attack.

22.♕xg4 ♕xg4

Finally we have reached a critical position of the whole line. Now White has to make an important choice.

23.♘e4

I believe the text move is White's only chance of fighting for an edge. I should perhaps mention that this is not a commonly shared opinion. In *Mastering the Chess Openings 2*, American IM John Watson treats Black's position as more or less lost after 23.♘xd6. The position is a bit more complicated than that, as we shall see below, but I should add that Watson's aim is not to be theoretically accurate, but to give the reader a general concept of the various openings considered in his book.

The theory continues:

23.♘xd6 ♗e5! 24.♘de4

The text is the only move as 24.♘ce4 runs into the unpleasant 24...♕h4.

24...♖be8!N

This strong novelty leads to a forced draw! Previously Black has tried only 24...♖f3 and 24...♕h4, which are both far from convincing.

25.d6

It is not so easy for White to move, as Black has the dangerous threat of ...♕h4 followed by ...♗d4. Let's see two of White's other options:

25.♖e1 ♗xc3 26.bxc3 ♖xe4 27.♖xe4 ♕d1† 28.♔h2 ♖xf2 and Black's attack looks extremely strong, while White cannot connect his pieces.

25.♗e3 ♕h4 26.♖fe1 ♗xc3 27.♘xc3 ♖xe3! and Black wins, because of the line 28.fxe3 ♕f2† 29.♔h2 ♖f5.

25...♗xc3!

Black is probably worse after 25...♕h4 26.♖e1 ♗d4 27.♖e3!.

26.♘xc3

Black has a draw at the very least after 26.bxc3 ♖xe4 27.f3 ♖xf3 28.♖xf3 ♖e2 29.♖f2 ♖e1† 30.♖f1 ♖e2.

26...♖xf2! 27.♔xf2 ♖f8† 28.♔e3

I believe White should accept a draw, as after 28.♔e1 ♕xg2 29.♖xf8† ♔xf8 only Black can play for a win.

28...♕xg2 29.♖xf8† ♔xf8 30.♘e4 ♕g1†=

23...b5

This looks to me like the only playable option. If instead:

23...♖be8 24.♘cxd6 ♖e5

White has a simple solution:



25.♘g3!N

This is much stronger than giving back the central pawn after 25.♖a3 ♖xd5, as has occurred twice in tournament practice.

25...♕d4

If 25...♕d7 then 26.♘c4.

26.♘de4

Now this is more effective.

26...♖xd5 27.♗e3 ♕e5 28.♘c3 ♖d7 29.♖fd1 ♖fd8 30.♖xd7 ♖xd7 31.♘ge4

Black can hardly survive given the activity of White's minor pieces.

24.axb5 axb5 25.♘cxd6

This is the last crossroads for Black in this line.

25...♗e5

The alternative is:

25...♖b6

White's knight looks somewhat trapped on d6 and Black is threatening to gain material with 26...♗e5, but I found a great idea – White solves this problem with the help of his h6-pawn!



26.♖a5!N

In the game Landgraf – Mitov, corr. 1975, White did not manage to find the right idea and ended up in a worse position after 26.♗e3 ♗e5 27.♗xc5 ♕f4 28.♖fe1 ♖xd6.

26...♕d7

Black defends the b5-pawn. If instead 26...♗e5 then White has nothing to worry about and can grab the pawn with 27.♘xb5.



27.♖a3!!

White now has the deadly threat of 28.♗h3 followed by ♗e6†.

27...♕g4 28.♖b3!

The easiest; White escapes with his knight and achieves a winning position (also worthy of consideration is 28.♖g3 ♕h5 29.♗e3 ♗d4 30.b4!?).



26.f4!?

This is a clear improvement over 26.♗e3 ♕h4 27.f4 ♗xf4 28.♗xf4 ♖xf4, as in Johansen – Yndesdal, corr. 1993, when Black's counterplay should be enough for a draw.

26...♗d4† 27.♔h2 ♕h4†N

I also examined the dangerous-looking 27...g5, but White is firmly in control after 28.♖a3! gxf4 29.♖xf4 ♖xf4 30.♕g3± and the d-pawn should decide the game.

Another natural defensive try was tested in an e-mail game:

27...♖b6



White played brilliantly for many moves:

28.♖a7!

This important move creates many tactical ideas against the black king.

28...c4 29.♗h3 ♕e2† 30.♖f2! ♕h5

The white rook is untouchable as 30...♗xf2? leads to mate-in-5 after 31.♗e6† ♔h8 32.♘f7† ♖xf7 33.♖a8† and so on.

31.♖d2 ♗e3

There are no other good squares for Black's bishop.

32.♖g7† ♔h8 33.♘f7† ♖xf7 34.♖xf7 ♔g8

And only now in the game Valeinis – Claridge, e-mail 2004, did White go wrong with 35.♖f6, which soon led to a draw. Instead the right move was:



35.♖e7!!N

This gains a big advantage for White. For example:

35...♗xf4†

35...♔f8 loses to 36.♘g3.

36.♔g2 ♔f8

The only challenging move; White obtains a decisive advantage after 36...♗xd2 37.♗xd2 ♕xd5 38.♗g4! followed by 39.♗f3.

37.♖a7 ♗xd2

If instead 37...g5 then White gains a big advantage with 38.♖a8† ♔f7 39.♖f2 ♖xh6 40.♖f3!.

38.♗xd2 ♕e2†

38...b4 loses neatly to 39.♖a8† ♔f7 40.♘g5† ♔e7 41.♖a7† ♔d6 42.♔g3! with a decisive attack.

39.♔g1 ♕d1†

Black cannot take the knight with 39...♕xe4 due to a forced mate after 40.♗b4† ♔g8 41.♖a8† ♔f7 42.♖f8#.

40.♗f1 ♕g4† 41.♗g2 ♕d1† 42.♔h2 ♕h5† 43.♔g3+–

Black has no chance of stopping White's attack.

28.♗h3 ♕h5

Black tries to penetrate with his queen to e2, but White has his own attacking ideas, once again thanks to his little h6-pawn.

29.♔g3

White sacrifices his central pawn, but frees his bishop.

29...♕xd5 30.♘g5!



The point.

30...♕b3†

The white knight is untouchable, as 30...♕xd6? 31.♗e6† ♔h8 32.♖a7 wins for White.

31.♔g2

White's attack looks very dangerous. For example:

31...♖f6 32.♘de4 ♖fb6 33.♖a7±

Conclusion:

The Modern Benoni is a dangerous practical weapon, as Black often has tactical tricks. I am very satisfied with the work I did in this chapter, and hopefully now White players will test the main lines I recommend, instead of varying with a variation such as 10.♗f4 in line C, which seems pretty soft to me.

Chapter 14

Benoni Systems



Benko Gambit

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5

4.cxb5

A) 4...e6 202
B) 4...a6 5.bxa6 203
B1) 5...♗xa6 203
B2) 5...e6 204
B3) 5...g6 6.♘c3 ♗xa6 7.g3 d6 8.♗g2 ♗g7 9.♘f3 206
B31) 9...♘fd7!? 206
B32) 9...♘bd7 10.♖b1! 208
B321) 10...♘b6 209
B322) 10...0–0 11.0–0 210
B3221) 11...♘b6 211
B3222) 11...♘e8 212
B3223) 11...♕a5 12.♗d2 213
B32231) 12...♘g4 214
B32232) 12...♖fb8 13.♕c2 215
B322321) 13...♕c7 216
B322322) 13...♘e8 217
B322323) 13...♘g4 217

B31) after 10...♘b6



11.h4!?N

B3222) after 15...♘f6



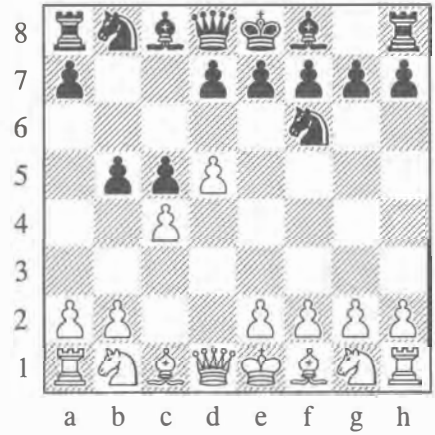
16.♖e1!N

B322321) after 21...e6



22.♗c4!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5



The original name of this opening was the Volga Gambit, named after the Volga River in Russia. At the end of the 1960s this variation was also promoted by Pal Benko, who provided many new suggestions. The name Benko Gambit stuck, and is particularly used in English-speaking countries.

4.cxb5

Here Black has the alternative **A) 4...e6** to the much more popular move, **B) 4...a6**.

A) 4...e6

In general this is a very rare continuation, but even so there are more than 200 games in my database! I do not rate this move highly, so I can hardly believe it might be a serious alternative to the main 4...a6.

My editor told me it is possible that this is actually the Volga Gambit, and that 4...a6 is the Benko Gambit, if you look at the names in a historical context. However, I am unsure if this is really the case and also I am not writing about chess history in this book, so I have decided to deal with the moves rather than the names.

5.♘c3 exd5 6.♘xd5 ♗b7



7.e4!

In my opinion this strong move promises White a clear advantage. Instead after 7.♘xf6† ♕xf6 Black has reasonable compensation. After the text move Black has several options, but none of them promise him equal play.

7...a6

This is probably the main move, but a few others also have a right to exist.

7...♘xd5 8.exd5 d6 9.♘e2!

It is a very good idea to transfer this knight to c3, where it will be perfectly placed, protecting both the b5- and d5-pawns.

9...♗e7 10.♘c3 0–0 11.♗e2 ♘d7

If 11...a6 then White should simply play: 12.0–0 (instead 12.bxa6 ♘xa6 allowed Black reasonable compensation in Kozul – Trkulja, Sarajevo 1998) 12...axb5 13.♗xb5 ♘a6 14.♖e1 ♗f6 15.♗f4 ♘b4 16.♗c4 With a clear advantage.

12.0–0 ♖e8 13.♗f4 ♘b6 14.♗f3 ♗f6

This position was reached in Citak – Werner, Budapest 2007.

15.a4!?N ♘c4 16.♕b3 ♘e5 17.♗e4

This would have secured White a clear advantage.

It would be very risky for Black to capture the central pawn: 7...♘xe4?! 8.♗c4 and

White's initiative is extremely dangerous. For example:

a) 8...♗e7 9.♘f3 ♘d6 And now the easiest would have been 10.♗e2! (instead 10.♗b3 was Skomorokhin – Fedoseev, Novgorod 1998) 10...0–0 11.0–0 a6 12.♖e1! axb5 13.♗f4 ♘e8 14.♗xb5 ♗f6 15.♗c4 Not only is White a pawn up, he also has a great positional advantage.

b) 8...♘d6? simply loses to 9.♗f4 ♗e7 10.♗e2.

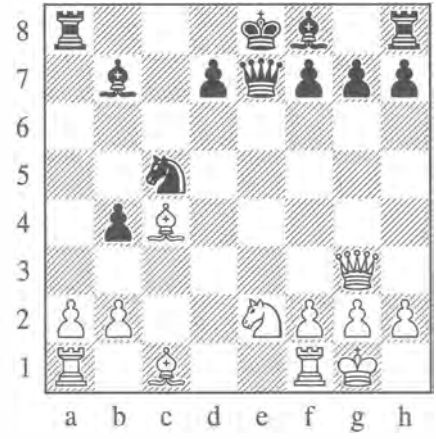
c) 8...♗d6 9.♘f3 0–0 10.0–0 a6 11.b6 ♘c6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.♕d3± with clear advantage in Grabliauskas – Vreedenborg, Berlin 1997.

7...♗e7 8.♗c4 0–0 9.♘e2 ♘xe4 10.♗f4 ♗d6 11.0–0 ♗xf4 12.♘exf4 gave White a clear positional advantage, due to his control of the d5-square, in Goldin – Tate, USA 2006.

8.bxa6

8.♘f3!?N might also be an interesting idea: 8...axb5 (White is better after 8...♘xd5 9.exd5 axb5 10.♕b3!) 9.♗g5 c4 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♗e2 With very promising play for White.

8...♘xa6 9.♗c4 ♘b4 10.♘xb4 cxb4 11.♕b3!? ♕e7 12.♘e2 ♘xe4 13.0–0 ♘c5 14.♕g3

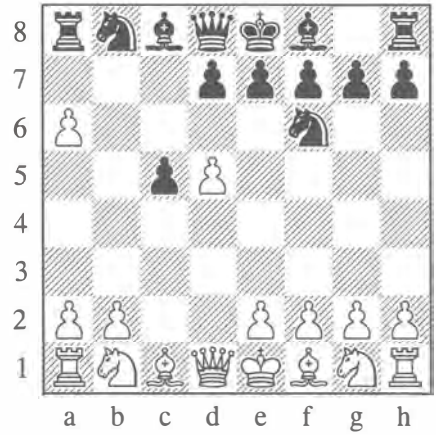


Black had allowed White to build up a serious initiative in Gleizerov – Capece, Ticino 1993.

B) 4...a6 5.bxa6

In my opinion, only by accepting the pawn sacrifice can White fight for a real advantage in this opening.

The suggested main line in this chapter is the one generally considered to give Black the most problems these days. The 10th move, which characterizes this line, was first played back in the mid-1980s, but was later popularized by Vladimir Epishin, who won almost all of his dozen or so games with it. This led to other strong players taking it up, such as Van Wely, Yusupov, Kramnik, and even yours truly on a couple of occasions.



Black usually develops his bishop to g7, as this is known to be the best line. There are two sidelines, one with early queen moves and one that involves more immediate action in the centre. Our three lines are: **B1) 5...♗xa6**, **B2) 5...e6** and the big main line with **B3) 5...g6**.

B1) 5...♗xa6

Some sources claim this move is imprecise, but as Black has no better move than 6...g6 after

6.♘c3, there is no reason for us to look out for an imprecise move order, which might not be imprecise anyway.

6.♘c3 ♕a5?!

I found more than 80 games with this position in my database. Instead Black could of course transpose back to the normal lines with 6...g6, but as White also had some additional options on move 6, this would be an illogical move order for Black to choose.

7.♗d2 ♕b6

White has tried every possible move here, but I like the concrete approach:

8.♕b3! ♕xb3

Black has no time to switch to positional play: 8...♕c7 9.♘f3 g6 10.e4 ♗xf1 11.♔xf1 d6 12.e5! and White launches a decisive attack.

9.axb3 ♗b7 10.♖xa8 ♗xa8 11.e4 e6

And here White could have claimed a clear advantage with:

12.♗f4!N

An improvement over 12.♗c4 ♘xe4 13.♘ge2 ♘xd2 14.♔xd2, which was also successful in B. Lalic – Fong, Saint John 1988. There are still many such improvements to be found in the sidelines of the openings, as most of the positions were first seen not in home preparation but over-the-board, which means that the players could not consult their external brains (Fritz).

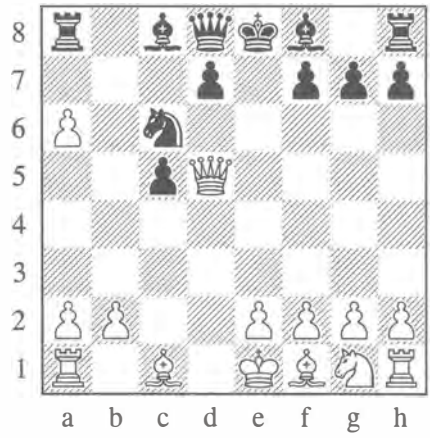
12...d6 13.♗b5† ♔d8 14.♘f3 exd5 15.♘g5!

The f7-pawn cannot be defended, as 15...♔e7 runs into the tactical blow 16.♗xd6†, followed by 17.♘xf7†.

15...♖g8 16.♘xf7† ♔c7 17.♗e2 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.♗c4!

Followed by 20.♘xd6 with an extra pawn.

B2) 5...e6 6.♘c3 ♘xd5 7.♘xd5 exd5 8.♕xd5 ♘c6



This tricky sideline has been played recently by the Turkmen GM Annageldyev. Black's idea is to play not only on the queenside, but also in the centre using his slight lead in development. Nevertheless this idea seems dubious to me and with precise play White obtains the better chances.

9.♘f3

White has other options as well, but the straightforward idea of ♘f3-e5 looks best.

9...♗xa6

Another line goes:

9...♗e7 10.♘e5 0–0

10...♘xe5? 11.♕xa8 was losing for Black in Minev – Spirov, Albena 1973.

11.♘xc6 dxc6 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.e3 ♗f6

Black's main problem is that his doubled c-pawns will be clear targets of attack in any rook endgames.

14.♗c4 ♗xa6 15.♗xa6 ♖xa6 16.♔e2 ♖b8

16...c4 17.♖d1 (In his annotations Atalik recommended 17.a3 ♖b6 18.♖a2 ♖db8 19.♖d1, but after 19...♗xb2 20.♗xb2 ♖xb2† 21.♖xb2 ♖xb2† 22.♔f3 g6 23.♖c1 ♖b3 24.♖xc4 ♖xa3 25.♖xc6 h5 the endgame is objectively drawish.) 17...♖b8

18.♔d2! transposes to the main line after 16...♖b8.

17.♖d1 c4 18.♔d2! ♖ab6

Black has some other options:

18...♔f8 19.♔c2 ♔e7 20.a3 and White should convert his extra pawn, Sahovic – Rogers, Nis 1985. Also 20.f4!? is interesting.

After 18...♗xb2 19.♗xb2 ♖xb2† 20.♔c3 ♖b8 21.a4!± the endgame is very difficult for Black.

19.a4!

Only like this! Instead 19.♔c2 ♗xb2 20.♖b1 ♗f6! 21.♖xb6 ♖xb6 should be an easy draw.

19...h5

The point behind White's play can be seen in the following line: 19...♗xb2 20.♗xb2 ♖xb2† 21.♔c3 ♖xf2 22.a5 ♖a8 23.a6 And White's passed pawn should easily decide the game.

20.a5 ♖a6 21.♔c2 ♖b5

This position was reached in Atalik – Annageldyev, Turkey 2007, and now the easiest would be:

22.♖a4 ♖axa5 23.♖xc4 ♖a2 24.♔b1 ♖axb2† 25.♗xb2 ♖xb2† 26.♔c1 ♖xf2 27.♖c2 ♖xc2† 28.♔xc2

The endgame should be winning for White. The reader might be slightly surprised by the length of this line, but it is really very important for the evaluation of White's idea of ♘f3-e5.

10.♗d2

I have spent a few hours analysing 10.♘e5 ♘xe5 11.♕xe5† ♗e7! (after 11...♕e7 12.♗f4! ♕xe5 13.♗xe5 f6 14.♗c3 d5 15.e3 Black has no compensation for the pawn) 12.♕xg7 ♗f6, but however unlikely it seems, it appears that Black has reasonable compensation for two pawns.

10...♗e7



11.e4!N

This natural move appears to be a novelty, and in my opinion it significantly improves White's prospects. Previously White has tried only 11.e3 and 11.♗c3.

11...♕b6

Another line runs 11...♗xf1 12.♔xf1 0–0 13.g3 ♘b4 14.♗xb4 cxb4 15.♔g2 ♖a5 16.♕b3 ♕a8 17.♖he1 when Black does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

12.♗xa6 ♕xa6 13.♘e5!

The point, as otherwise Black could count on reasonable compensation.

13...0–0

White is clearly better after 13...♘xe5 14.♕xe5 ♕e6 15.♗c3.

14.♘c4

By closing the f1-a6 diagonal White solves his king's problem; now he is ready to castle short.

14...♘d4 15.0–0 ♘c2

15...♕e6 16.a4± does not bring Black relief either.

16.♖ac1 ♘d4 17.♖fe1 ♕xa2 18.♕xd7

18.♗e3 ♘b3 19.♖cd1 ♖a7 20.♖d3!? looks very interesting as well.

18...♖a7



19.♕g4

White is a healthy pawn up.

B3) 5...g6 6.♘c3 ♗xa6

After this brief digression into variations that are not usually considered to be part of the Benko Gambit, it is time to take on the main variation.



By sacrificing the pawn Black gets good control of the big diagonal and can exert pressure down the half-open a- and b-files. These are benefits which can last well into the endgame and so, unusually for a gambit Black does not generally mind of queens swap.

7.g3

Recently this has been the most fashionable direction for White in the Benko Gambit.

7...d6 8.♗g2 ♗g7 9.♘f3

Now there is a split determined by which knight Black places on d7. Line **B31** is **9...♘fd7!?** and **B32** is **9...♘bd7**.

B31) 9...♘fd7!?



At first sight this looks a bit artificial, but in fact it contains a healthy positional plan: Black increases his pressure along the long dark diagonal, not allowing White to play ♖b1 and b2-b3, as he will in the main line. The d7-knight heads for b6 and hopefully on to c4, while the other knight will often be developed from a6 to b4 or c7. I have spent a few hours analysing this line and have managed to find an attractive idea that I would like to share:

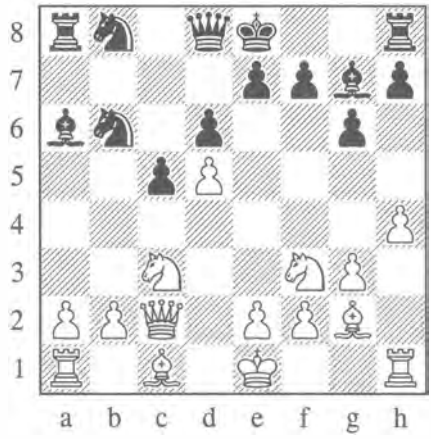
10.♕c2

Another interesting line is: 10.0–0 ♘b6 11.♕c2 0–0 (instead 11...♘c4 would be premature due to 12.♘d2! ♕a5 13.♘xc4 ♗xc4 14.♗d2± and White achieves his optimal set-up) 12.♖d1 ♘8d7 13.♗f4 White's idea is that after 13...♘c4 14.♘d2 ♕a5 15.♘xc4 ♗xc4 16.♗d2± he once again has the ideal set-up, as in Kraidman – P. Olsen, Kusadasi 1990.

10...♘b6

Premature would be 10...0–0, as it allows White to launch a dangerous offensive against Black's king: 11.h4! ♘f6 12.h5 And if 12...♘xh5 then White continues with 13.♖xh5! gxh5 14.♘g5 f5 15.♘e6± with a dangerous initiative.

11.h4!?N



I find that it is quite logical to generate some activity on the kingside in reply to Black's knight manoeuvre to the queenside.

11...h6

In my view this is Black's best reply.

11...h5?!

This is clearly inferior as it weakens the g5-square.

12.♘g5 ♘8d7

12...0–0? is poor, as 13.g4! gives White a decisive attack.

Here White has an interesting tactical solution:

13.♘e6! fxe6 14.♕xg6† ♔f8 15.dxe6 ♘e5 16.♕f5† ♔g8

16...♔e8? loses to 17.♗c6†!.

17.f4

White will regain the piece and keep a clear advantage.

11...♗b7 12.e4 ♘a6

A typical idea in this variation; Black's knight often comes into the game via a6.

13.h5 ♘b4 14.♕d1 ♗a6 15.♗f1

A very tense position has arisen, but I would definitely prefer White. The following is just a rough variation:

15...♕c8 16.a3 ♗xf1 17.♔xf1 ♕a6† 18.♔g2 ♘d3

This all looks very logical and attractive, but the h-file is a very important detail:

19.hxg6 hxg6 20.♖xh8† ♗xh8 21.♕h1! ♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♘xc1 23.♖xc1

White is clearly better, as he will combine an offensive against Black's king with an attack on the f7-pawn.

11...♘c4 12.♘d2! (12.h5 ♕a5 is less clear) 12...♘d7 (12...♕a5 13.♘xc4 ♗xc4 14.♗d2 is similar, and White also has clearly better chances) 13.♘xc4 ♗xc4 14.b3 ♗a6 15.h5 ♕a5 16.♗d2 White is clearly better.

12.♘h2!?



The knight transfers to g4 where it will have multipurpose functions: firstly, it is ready to support White's offensive if Black decides to castle short; secondly, it can go to e3, which is a nice square for it, protecting the d5-pawn and also covering the c4-square.

12...♘8d7

Black gets nowhere with the pseudo-active 12...♗c4 13.♘g4 ♘a6 14.♘e3 ♘b4 15.♕b1±.

After 12...♗b7 13.♘g4 ♘a6 14.♘e3 ♘b4 15.♕b3 0–0 16.0–0 Black's set-up does not look very logical to me. For example: 16...f5 (16...♖b8 17.a3 ♘a6 18.h5 is very unpleasant for Black) 17.a3 ♘a6 (Unfortunately for Black, the following aggressive line does not work: 17...f4 18.gxf4 ♖xf4 19.♗d2 ♘a6 20.♕c2 ♕e8 21.h5! gxh5 22.♘f5 ♖g4 23.f3 Black is losing an exchange.) 18.♗d2 Finally White has mobilized all his pieces, while Black's set-up does not look especially dynamic, so I believe White is clearly better.

12...♘c4 13.h5 g5 14.0–0 ♘d7 15.♘g4 transposes to 12...♘8d7.

13.h5

Premature would be 13.♘g4 h5! 14.♘e3 ♗d4 15.♗d2 ♘f6 and Black has nice play.

13...g5 14.♘g4 ♘c4

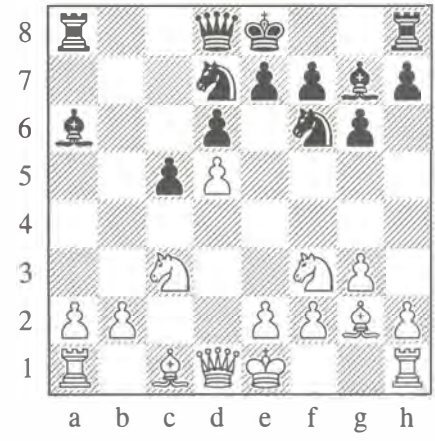
Very dangerous is 14...0–0? as after 15.f4 Black faces an immediate attack. Then if 15...f5 16.♘e3 and the f5-pawn is falling.

15.0–0 ♕a5 16.a3!?



We have reached a very complicated position which requires careful evaluation. Black has an optimal set-up for his pieces on the queenside, but White has managed to create some weaknesses on the kingside, and therefore in many cases it would be very dangerous for Black to castle. White has a clear plan to improve his position: he will play ♖a2 and after moving his knight from c3 he would be ready to chase away the c4-knight with b2-b3. So in general I think White's chances are preferable.

B32) 9...♘bd7



10.♖b1!

The obvious idea of this move is to meet Black's ...♘b6 with a calm b2-b3 (as in line B321) avoiding any possible penetration by the knight to c4, as well as generally restricting Black's activity on the queenside.

The split now is between two main lines: **B321) 10...♘b6** and **B322) 10...0–0**.

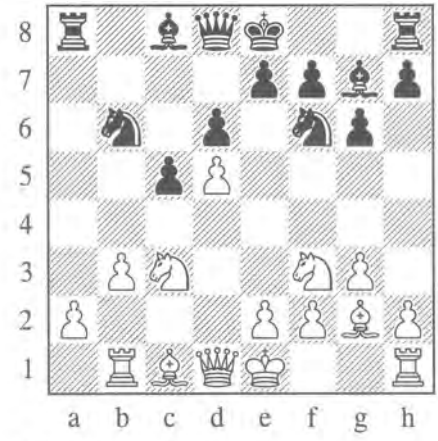
One minor option is 10...♕a5. White should simply react with 11.♗d2 (11.0–0 ♘b6) and now best for Black would be 11...0–0, transposing to the main line, since 11...♘b6 runs into 12.b3 ♕a3 13.0–0 0–0 14.♘e1!. White's queen is still on d1, so White has the

opportunity to play a ♘e1-c2 manoeuvre, chasing Black's queen from a3. 14...♗b7 15.♘c2 ♕a6 16.e4 ♘e8 17.a4 gave White a clear advantage in Van Wely – Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

B321) 10...♘b6 11.b3 ♗c8

Threatening ...♗f5; this slightly artificial manoeuvre was Jan Pinski's recommendation in his book *The Benko Gambit* in 2005.

Another option is: 11...♗b7 12.♘h4 (White should not play 12.e4 in view of 12...♗a6) 12...0–0 13.0–0 ♘e8 14.♕d2 ♘c7 15.e4 (less convincing would be: 15.♗b2 ♗xc3 16.♕xc3 f6 17.e4 ♖xa2) 15...e6 16.♗b2 exd5 17.♘xd5 ♘bxd5 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.exd5 ♕f6 This position was reached in V. Milov – Tregubov, Germany 2001, and now White missed the strong 20.b4!, which would have secured his advantage.



12.♘h4

Black's idea to meet 12.e4 with 12...♗a6.

12...h6

Now 13...g5 followed by ...♗f5 is Black's intention.

13.♕c2 ♕d7

This extremely original idea was first employed by the Dutch player Van der Weide.

Within a few seconds the computer shows an interesting tactical possibility for Black:

13...g5 14.♘f5 ♗xf5 15.♕xf5 ♘fxd5!?

Nevertheless White keeps an advantage with precise play:

16.♘xd5 e6 17.♕d3 ♘xd5

17...exd5 18.a4 0–0 19.h4! is an important resource. Before castling short, White forces a weakness in Black's pawn structure on the kingside. After 19...g4 20.0–0 White is clearly better.

18.a4 0–0

Black does not get sufficient compensation for the exchange after: 18...♘b4 19.♕b5† ♔f8 20.♗xa8 ♗c3† 21.♔f1 ♕xa8 22.f3±

19.h4 g4 20.♗xd5 exd5 21.♕xd5 ♖e8 22.0–0 ♖xe2 23.♗e3

White is clearly better, as he is threatening both ♖fd1 and ♕c4, attacking the rook on e2 and the g4-pawn.

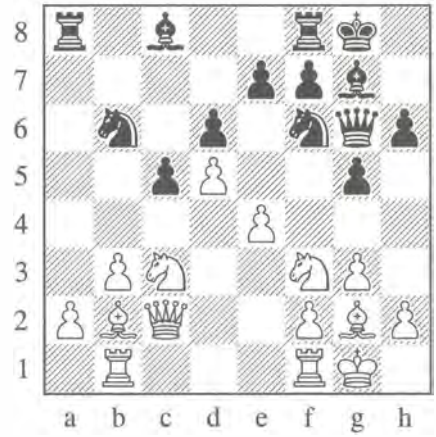
14.♗b2

Much worse is 14.0–0?! g5 15.♘f3 ♘fxd5 16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 and Black regained the pawn and had good play in Epishin – Halkias, Ohrid 2001.

14...g5 15.♘f3 ♕f5

The black queen transfers to the kingside in order to generate some counterplay against White's king. Another option is 15...♗b7 16.♖d1 0–0 17.0–0 ♘fxd5 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♘xg5! hxg5 21.♗xd5 and White was simply a pawn up in Gustafsson – S. Kasparov, Germany 2002.

16.e4 ♕g6 17.0–0 0–0



Black does indeed have some interesting ideas on the kingside and White must play accurately to quell the danger. I finally came to the conclusion that White's best option is:

18.♖fc1!?N

Defending against tricks with ...♘xd5. I found the other moves less convincing. For example: 18.♖fd1 ♗g4 19.h3 ♗xf3 20.♗xf3 h5 21.a4 g4 22.hxg4 hxg4 23.♗g2 ♘fd7 24.♘e2 ♗xb2 25.♕xb2 ♘e5 Black has reasonable compensation thanks to his strong knight on e5, Breier – Van der Weide, Groningen 1999. We should also note that the careless 18.♖bc1? allows 18...♘xe4.

18...♘g4

18...♗g4 can simply be met with 19.♘d2 when White is better.

19.a4 f5 20.h3 ♘e5

20...♘xf2? does not work due to 21.♔xf2 ♗xc3 22.♗xc3 fxe4 23.♔g1 and White is winning.

21.♘xe5 ♗xe5 22.♘b5! ♗xb2 23.♖xb2 f4 24.e5! ♕xc2 25.♖bxc2

White is clearly better, as Black has no compensation for the pawn.

B322) 10...0–0



This is definitely the main move.

11.0–0

Here the three main options are **B3221) 11...♘b6, B3222) 11...♘e8** and the hugely popular **B3223) 11...♕a5**. Besides these lines, we will also briefly consider the following options:

11...♕b6?!

This is a relatively rare set-up, and indeed it is not so clear what Black's queen is doing on b6.

12.b3 ♖fb8

Or 12...♖ab8 13.♕c2 ♖fc8 14.♗d2 e6 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.♖fd1 d5 17.♗f4 ♖a8 18.♘e5 ♗b7 19.♘c4! ♕a6 20.♘d6 and White had a clear edge in Piket – Baklan, Germany 1999.

13.♕c2 ♕b7 14.♖d1 ♘e8 15.e4 ♘c7 16.a4±

White has improved his position by making all the standard useful moves, while I cannot find any logic in Black's play, Skomorokhin – Andreev, St Petersburg 1996.

11...♘g4

This typical knight jump is not popular in this particular position. White's best reply is:

12.♗d2!

Because after 12.♕c2 Black is just in time to get his play going with 12...♘ge5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.b3 ♕a5 15.♗d2 ♕a3!.

12...♘ge5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.b3 ♕a5

And here we are not obliged to play 15.♕c2, but instead have a stronger option in:

15.♕c1!

Preventing Black from playing the annoying ...♕a3.

15...♖fb8 16.a4

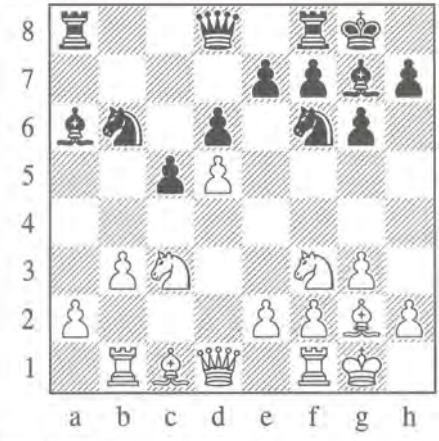
White has an advantage, as we have reached the "optimal" set-up.

B3221) 11...♘b6

This is quite a popular line.

12.b3

Naturally we reply with this obligatory move.



12...♘e8

Black's many other options include:

a) 12...♕c7

This looks rather dubious, as c7 is not such a good square for the black queen.

13.♗b2

White's most popular reply is 13.♖e1?! but I found an unexpected nuance: 13...♘g4!N 14.♗b2 ♗xc3 15.♗xc3 ♗b7 16.e4 ♖xa2∞ And here it works perfectly for Black, as White has to waste a tempo defending the f2-pawn!

13...e6

Once again this idea does not work.

14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♘g5 ♖ae8 16.♗h3 e5 17.a4

White had a great positional advantage in Barsov – Gunnarsson, Istanbul (ol) 2000.

b) 12...♖a7 13.♗b2

Also good enough is 13.a4 as in Piket – Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

13...♕a8

13...e6 opens up the play in White's favour: 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♘g5 ♕e7 16.♗h3! e5 17.a4 With a clear positional edge, Chatalbashev – Vafiadis, Thessaloniki 2007.

14.♘h4 ♖b8

White has tried several moves here, but the most precise seems to be:

15.♕d2 ♘bd7

15...♘fd7 16.a4 gives White the advantage.

16.♘f3

White is gradually improving his position, while Black cannot create any serious play, Sakalauskas – Savickas, Lithuania (ch) 2007.

c) 12...♗b7 13.e4 e6?!

This idea usually does not work, and this position is no exception.

14.dxe6 ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♗xe4 16.exf7† ♔h8

After 16...♖xf7 White gains a decisive advantage with the help of a nice tactical operation: 17.♘g5 ♗xb1 18.♘xf7 ♔xf7 19.♗d5†! ♘xd5 (19...♔f8 loses to 20.♗xa8 ♘xa8 21.♕f3† ♔g8 [21...♗f5 fails to 22.g4] 22.♕d5† ♔h8 23.♗g5 Followed by ♖b1.) 20.♕xd5† ♔f8 21.♗g5 ♕b8 22.♖xb1 ♖xa2 23.♖e1 Black is losing his c- and d-pawns, at the very least.

17.♖b2!

White had a clear advantage in Olarasu – Bozinovic, Nova Gorica 2007.

13.♗b2 ♘c7

Black could have regained the pawn with 13...♗xc3 14.♗xc3 ♗b7 15.e4 ♖xa2, but

after 16.b4 White still has strong positional pressure.

14.♕d2!

This smart move tactically defends the d5-pawn.

Less accurate is 14.♘h4?! ♗xc3! 15.♗xc3 ♗b7 16.e4 ♘b5! (winning an important tempo) 17.♗a1 ♖xa2 with balanced play.

14...♖a7

Instead 14...♗xc3? would fall straight into White's trap: 15.♗xc3 ♘bxd5 (better is 15...f6 even though after 16.♘h4 White's advantage is indisputable) 16.♕h6! The point of White's 14th move. 16...e5 17.♘g5 ♘f6 18.f4 White quickly developed a killing attack in Harikrishna – Tregubov, Internet (blitz) 2004.

15.♖fe1

White logically prepares the e2-e4 advance.

15...♗b7 16.e4 ♕a8

16...f5 is met strongly by 17.♘g5 with an advantage to White.

17.a4±

Black did not manage to create any counterplay in Dorfman – Degraeve, France (ch) 2003.

B3222) 11...♘e8

Planning ...♘e8-c7-b5 with the idea of exchanging a pair of knights, which would clearly favour Black, as the white knight is an important defender on the queenside.

12.♕c2

In 2000 I employed the following interesting idea:

12.♖e1 ♘c7 13.e4 ♘b5

Later Black improved his play with 13...♗c4 14.a3 ♕b8 and the weakness of the b3-square gave Black decent counterplay. 15.♗f4 (or 15.♗g5 ♖e8) 15...♗xc3!? 16.bxc3 ♕a7 With reasonable compensation for the pawn in Kongsted – G. Jones Copenhagen 2005.

14.♘e2!

White was better in Avrukh – Hendriks, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

12...♘c7



13.♖d1

13.a4 was first played by Grischuk in a game against Tregubov in France in 2005. Despite White's perfect score with 13.a4, I believe Black is fine after 13...♗xc3!. We should note that capturing on c3 followed by ...♗c4, winning either the d5- or a2-pawns, is a typical manoeuvre by Black. 14.bxc3 ♗c4 15.♖d1 ♗xd5∞ It is difficult for White to use the long diagonal, while Black has clear play on the queenside, Jirka – Plischki, Olomouc 2006.

13...♗xc3

Black's most ambitious continuation. Another line is:

13...♘b5 14.♘xb5 ♗xb5 15.b3 ♕b6

White is ready for 15...c4?! 16.♘d4 cxb3 17.axb3 and Black faces a tough choice: either to give up his dark-squared bishop, or to allow White's knight to penetrate to c6.

16.a4

White has achieved the optimal pawn configuration on the queenside. I believe the following encounter is a good example of White's plan:

16...♗a6 17.e4

White had an opportunity to play 17.♗b2?!, but I believe this would be inaccurate, as after the dark-squared bishops are traded Black would gain the important b4-square for his queen.

17...♖fb8 18.♗e3 ♕d8 19.h3

This move is usually a useful prophylactic measure.

19...♖b7 20.♘d2 ♖ab8 21.♗f1!

Swapping the light-squared bishops is an important strategic idea, in order to establish control over the c4-square and later on even the b5-square.

21...♗xf1 22.♔xf1 ♕a5

This was Shaidullina – Pogonina, Orel 2006, and here White should have continued:

23.♘c4 ♕a6 24.♔g2 ♘e5 25.♘a3!

Followed by ♘b5 with a pleasant advantage.

14.♕xc3 ♗xe2 15.♗h6 ♘f6



16.♖e1!N

In my opinion the text move is stronger than 16.♖d2, which has been played in every game. Then 16...♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♖e8 leads to mutual chances.

16...♘cxd5

The main point is of course that after 16...♗xf3 17.♗xf8 White is attacking the e7-pawn.

17.♕d2

White wins an exchange and I do not think Black's compensation is sufficient.

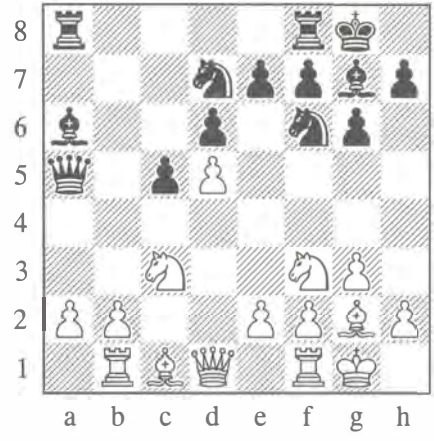
17...♗b5

17...♗xf3 does not change the assessment: 18.♗xf3 e6 19.♗xf8 ♔xf8 20.a3 White has a clear plan: to prepare the b2-b4 advance.

18.♗xf8 ♕xf8 19.♘g5 ♗c6 20.a3 e6 21.♖bc1±

Black definitely has some compensation for the exchange, but White's chances are preferable.

B3223) 11...♕a5



This is by far Black's most popular option. In my opinion this is the real starting position of the whole system. The further play contains various strategic ideas: White's main plan is to get his pawns to b3 and a4 with his bishop on d2, which we will call the optimal set-up,

while Black logically should try to prevent White from achieving this set-up. Black has two main strategic ideas: the first is to put his queen on a3, blocking White's a-pawn and thus preventing a2-a4, and the second is to play ...c5-c4 at an appropriate moment.

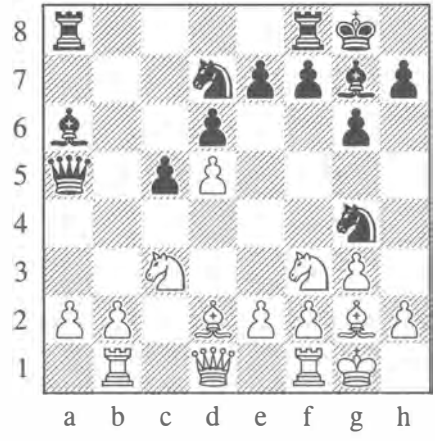
12.♗d2

I always thought that White should first play ♕c2 and ♖d1, and only then decide where to develop his bishop, but I have changed my opinion due to the games of a great Benko expert, Pavel Tregubov, who has recently answered 12.♕c2 with 12...♘b6! and gained excellent play.

Now Black has a choice between **B32231) 12...♘g4** and the main move, **B32232) 12...♖fb8**.

Instead 12...♘b6?! now makes no sense due to 13.b3 ♕a3 14.♘e1! transposing to the aforementioned Van Wely – Carlsen game (the 10...♕a5 minor line on page 208-209).

B32231) 12...♘g4



Now I believe I have found a strong move that is connected with a new concept.

13.♕c1!

Let's have a brief look at White's other options:

13.a4 ♘b6 14.h3 ♘e5 15.♘g5 This is also my idea, but Black gets plenty of counterplay after 15...♘bc4 16.♗e1 ♕b6 17.b3 ♘a5 with double-edged play.

I also tried 13.h3 ♘ge5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.♕c1, but Black is just in time to create some play: 15...♖fb8 (after 15...♘c4 16.♗h6 ♗xh6 17.♕xh6 ♖fb8 18.♘e4 f6 19.h4 White would gain some activity on the kingside) 16.b3 c4⇄

13.♕c2 ♘ge5 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.b3 looks natural, but Black has time for 15...♕a3!. Actually this line helped me to generate the idea of 13.♕c1. I have analysed this position quite intensively and concluded Black is simply fine. The most recent game continued: 16.♗c1 ♕a5 17.♗b2 (17.a4 runs into 17...♘f3†! 18.♗xf3 ♕xc3 19.♕xc3 ♗xc3 and next Black will double rooks along the b-file, when the b3-pawn becomes a real target.) 17...c4 Black had good counterplay in Flear – Tregubov, Clichy 2008.



13...♘ge5

There are two alternatives we should consider closely.

13...♖fb8 14.b3 c4

14...♗xc3? does not work due to 15.♗xc3 ♕xa2 16.♘d2 when the black queen is trapped on a2 and is helpless against ♖a1.

15.h3 ♘ge5 16.♘d4!

Usually if White manages to play ♘d4 after ...c5-c4 then he keeps his advantage.

16...cxb3

16...♘c5 17.♕c2 cxb3 18.axb3 leaves White with a clear advantage.

17.♘c6!

Only not 17.axb3? ♘d3! followed by 18...♗xd4.

17...♘xc6 18.dxc6 ♘c5

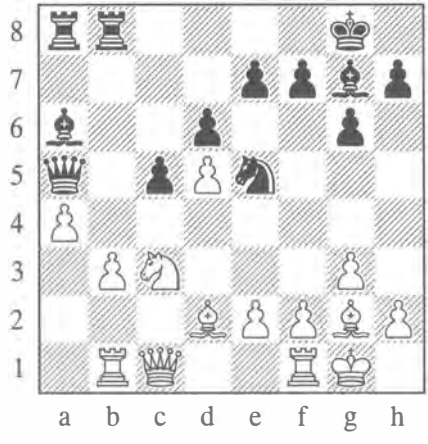
18...bxa2 19.♖xb8† ♖xb8 20.cxd7 is losing for Black.

19.♘d5 ♕xa2 20.♘xe7† ♔f8 21.c7

Black cannot avoid losing material.

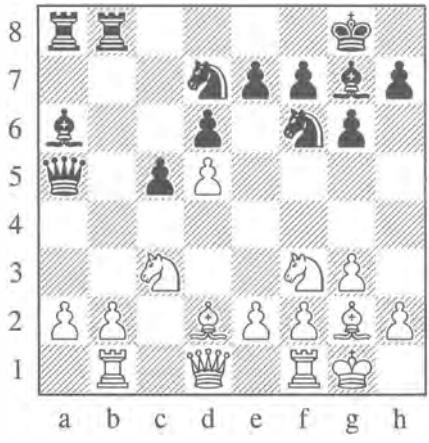
13...♗xc3 Objectively this is not the best move, but actually it is the critical test of my idea. 14.♗xc3 ♕xa2 15.♖a1 ♕c4 (if 15...♕b3 then 16.♕g5 ♘gf6 17.♘h4! allows White to develop a strong attack with the idea of ♘f5) 16.h3 ♘gf6 (16...♘ge5 runs into 17.♘xe5 dxe5 18.d6 exd6 19.♖d1! with a big advantage for White) 17.♕h6 ♗b7 18.e4 ♖xa1 19.♖xa1 ♖a8 20.♖e1 It is hard to believe Black can hold this position.

14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.b3 ♖fb8 16.a4±



White has achieved his optimal set-up and should be able to play for a win without any major risks.

B32232) 12...♖fb8



13.♕c2

This is White's best option, but we will also have a quick look at a couple of other moves:

13.a4 ♘g4 14.♕c2 ♘ge5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.b3 ♕b4 gives Black reasonable counterplay, and we will examine this position later via a different move order (15.a4).

13.b3 ♘e8! (and certainly not 13...♕a3? 14.♘e1! as we already know) 14.♕c2 ♕a3 15.♗c1 ♕a5 16.♗b2 c4 Black had counterplay in Epishin – Krivoshey, Graz 2001.

Now Black has a wide choice between: **B322321) 13...♕c7, B322322) 13...♘e8** and **B322323) 13...♘g4**.

It should be mentioned in passing that the following line is clearly in White's favour:

13...♘b6 14.b3 ♕a3 15.♗c1 ♕a5 16.♖d1

White will gradually be able to improve his pieces. For example:

16...♘e8 17.♗b2 ♘c7 18.e4 ♗c8 19.h3

It would be more accurate to start with

19.a3, which would probably transpose to the game after 19...♗d7 20.h3.

19...♗d7

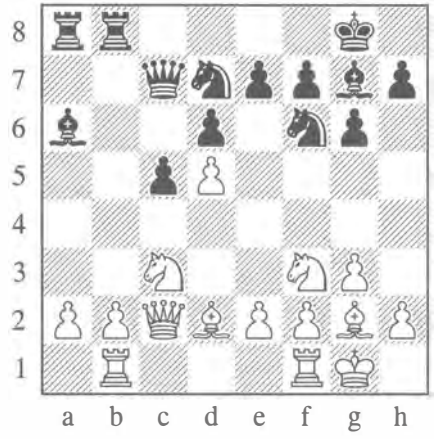
White's last move unnecessarily allowed 19...♗xc3 20.♗xc3 ♕xa2 when after 21.♕c1 f6 the position is rather double-edged.

20.a3 ♕a6 21.♖dc1 ♕c8 22.♔h2

Black failed to create counterplay in Malakhatko – Raznikov, Calvia 2007.

B322321) 13...♕c7

Now this retreat looks quite logical and surprisingly it leads to very concrete play:



14.b3

14.♖fe1?! would allow Black to regain his pawn with 14...♗c4!.

14...♘b6 15.♘h4

Less convincing is 15.♘g5 ♕b7! 16.b4 (16.♖fd1 ♘bxd5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 is also fine for Black) 16...cxb4 17.♖xb4 ♕c7 with counterplay.

15...♕b7

Another way of playing is:

15...♗b7 16.e4 ♗a6 17.♖fd1 ♘bd7

Worse is 17...♘g4 18.h3 ♘e5 19.♗e3 c4 20.b4 ♘d3 21.♘f3 with a clear advantage.

18.♘f3

Less clear is 18.h3 ♘e5 19.♗e3 ♕a5 as in Goh Koong Jong – Aikhoje, Turin (ol) 2006.

18...♘g4 19.a4 ♘de5 20.♘xe5 ♘xe5 21.♗e1 ♖a7

21...c4 22.b4 ♘d3 23.b5 ♗c8 24.♗f1! would not help Black either, as White's passed pawns on the queenside should decide the game.

Now in Cox – J. Houska, Sunningdale 2007, White should have played the calm:

22.h3N

Threatening 23.f4.

22...c4 23.b4 ♘d3 24.b5 ♗c8

Now White has a neat tactical solution:

25.b6! ♖xb6 26.♘b5

With a decisive advantage.

16.♖fd1 ♘fxd5

Black can also take with the other knight, 16...♘bxd5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5, which simply transposes.

17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗h6 ♗xh6

There is another line to consider:

18...♘b4 19.♕d2 ♘c6

19...♗xh6 20.♕xh6 ♕c8 (20...♘c6 loses to 21.♘f3 f6 22.♘h4! and Black is helpless against White's threats) 21.♗xa8 ♖xa8 22.♘f3 Black has insufficient compensation for being an exchange down, L. Williams – Situru, Bled (ol) 2002.

Instead of the "brilliant" 20.♘f5, White should continue with:

20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.b4!

With an initiative.

19.♗xd5 ♕c8

19...♕b5 was pointed out in *Chess Informant* as an improvement for Black. I disagree with this claim, as White is better after: 20.♘xg6 ♖a7 21.♗c4 ♕c6 22.♘h4 (22.♘f4 ♗xf4 23.gxf4 e6 24.♖d3 might be an interesting option as well) 22...e6 23.♗xa6 ♕xa6 24.a4

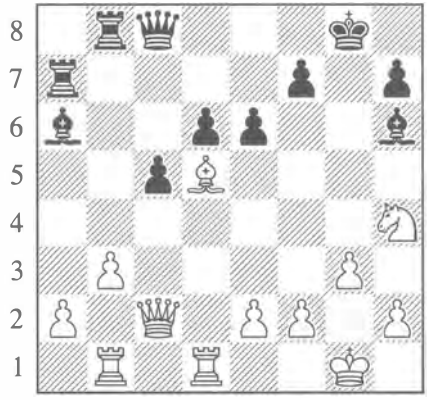
♖b4 25.♘f3 ♕b6 26.e4± I do not see any real compensation for the pawn.

20.♘xg6

After 20.♗xa8 ♖xa8 Black has some compensation for the exchange, thanks to his bishop pair.

20...♖a7 21.♘h4 e6

And now I believe White's best move is:



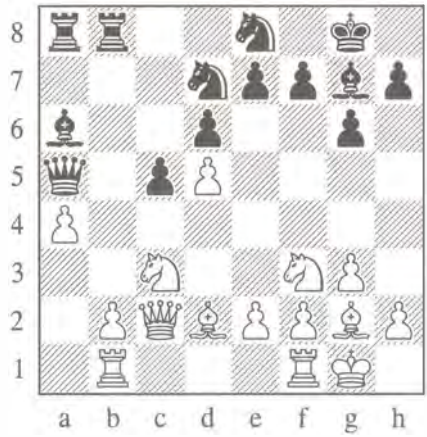
22.♗c4!N

I think this is correct because swapping light-squared bishops will be useful for White.

22...d5 23.♗xa6 ♕xa6 24.a4 ♖ab7 25.♘f3 ♕a5 26.e3

White has the advantage.

B322322) 13...♘e8 14.a4!



Although 14.♖fe1 has been employed by Kramnik, I like the text move more.

14...♖b7

Once again White appears to be ready for 14...c4 15.♘b5 ♕b6 16.♗e3 ♘c5, and now instead of 17.♕c4, as in Moreno Ruiz – Perez Gonzalez, Madrid 2006, White could have secured his advantage with 17.♘bd4 ♘f6 18.b4! cxb3 19.♘xb3±.

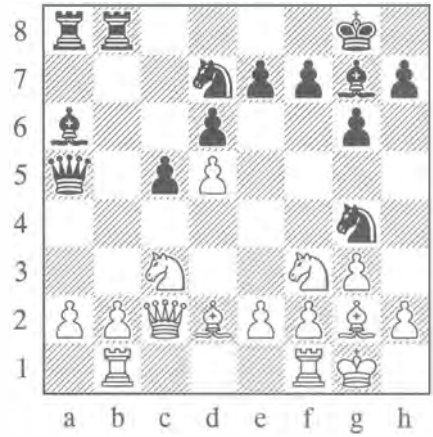
15.b3 ♕d8 16.♖fe1 ♖ab8

And now instead of the natural expansion with 17.e4, White comes up with a very interesting plan:

17.♘d1 ♘b6 18.♘e3 ♕d7 19.a5 ♘c8 20.♘c4

White had a clear advantage in Chatalbashev – Remmler, Germany 2008.

B322323) 13...♘g4



In my opinion this is the most challenging continuation.

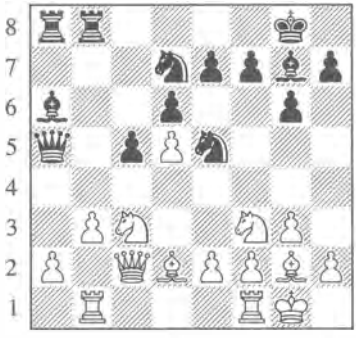
14.b3

Less convincing is 14.a4 ♘ge5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.b3, and this position will be examined below in the 14...♘ge5 line.

14...♕a3

Simply bad is 14...c4?! 15.h3 cxb3 16.axb3 ♘ge5 (maybe the lesser evil would be the ugly 16...♘h6, though after 17.♖fc1 Black can hardly count on compensation with his knight so poorly placed) 17.♘d4 and White's knight penetrates to the c6-square with great effect, Bakalarz – Wehbe, Germany 1995.

A very important alternative is:
14...♘ge5



15.♘e1!

This is the only way White can fight for the advantage. The alternatives would allow Black reasonable counterplay:

15.a4 ♕b4! (15...♘xf3† 16.♗xf3 ♘e5 17.♗e4! is good for White) 16.♘a2 (16.♘b5 ♕g4 is also okay for Black) 16...♕g4 Surprisingly Black's queen is very well placed on g4. Black's immediate threat is 17...♗d3 and in general his position is quite reliable.

15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.a4 (16.♘e4 ♕a3! cannot be satisfactory for White) 16...♕b4 17.♘e4 (17.♘a2 ♕g4! is good for Black) This important position is playable for Black, but he needs to play the brave: 17...♕a3! I have failed to find any advantage for White. Here is my rough line: 18.♖fe1 ♖b7 19.♗c3 ♘d7! Swapping the dark-squared bishops appears to be in Black's favour, as he takes control of the important b4-square. 20.♘d2 ♗xc3 21.♕xc3 ♕b4 leads to double-edged play.

15...♕a3

Unfortunately for Black the following line does not work: 15...c4?! 16.b4 ♕a3 (16...♖xb4?! loses the exchange after 17.♘e4. The important point of White's ♘e1 move is that the white queen is protected on c2 and Black cannot escape from the pin with 17...♕a4.) 17.♕e4 (with the idea of playing 18.♘c2) 17...♘f6 18.♕d4 Black cannot avoid ♘c2 next, when he has a strategically lost position.

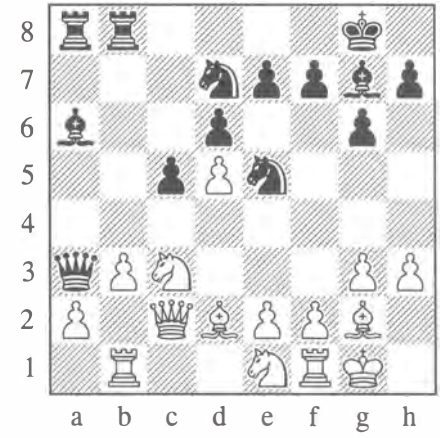
16.h3

This transposes to the main line.

15.h3

White should certainly avoid the following line: 15.♗c1 ♕b4 16.♗b2, as Black has 16...c4 at his disposal, gaining good counterplay on the queenside, Orsini – Cremon, Brazil 1999.

15...♘ge5 16.♘e1



A smooth multipurpose move; firstly, White is threatening to trap Black's knight in the centre with f2-f4, and secondly he is aiming to chase Black's queen from a3 with ♘e1-c2 after the preparatory ♕d1. This is an important position for the whole line; I have come to the conclusion that White's chances are preferable. Now I would like to share my analysis, but I have a feeling there is still room for improvements.

16...f5

I do not see any point in Black blocking his own dark-squared bishop with 16...♘f6, when after 17.♕d1 White easily executes his plan, gaining much better chances.

16...♘b6 17.♕d1

17.♕e4? is met strongly by 17...♘ec4! 18.bxc4 ♘xc4 and Black takes over the initiative.

17...♗c8

After 17...♕a5 18.♖c1 c4?! White achieves his strategic aim: 19.♘c2 cxb3 20.axb3 followed by ♘d4-c6.

17...♘ec4?! This unexpected piece sacrifice looks quite attractive, but White can refute it with a series of precise moves: 18.bxc4 ♘xc4 19.♘c2 ♕a5 20.♖xb8† ♖xb8 21.♘e4 ♘xd2 22.♕xd2 ♕xd2 (22...♕xa2 23.♖c1 ♖b2 24.♕d1 is clearly better for White) 23.♘xd2 ♖b2 24.♖c1 ♖xa2 25.♘f1! ♗xe2 26.♘fe3 Black does not have enough compensation for the piece.

18.♘c2

18.♖c1!? is also worth considering.

18...♕a5 19.a3

19.♕e1!? might be an interesting alternative.

19...♗f5 20.♘e4 ♕a6 21.g4 ♗c8

21...♗xe4 22.♗xe4 ♕b7 23.a4 e6 24.♘e3! also leads to an advantage for White.

So far we have followed Tunik – Shevelev, Israel 2003, but here White could have claimed an advantage with energetic play:

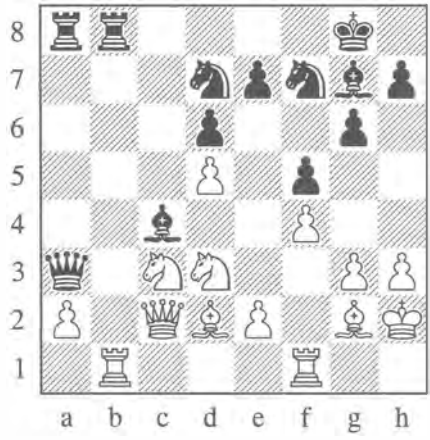


22.f4 ♘ed7 23.♗c3

17.f4 ♘f7 18.♘d3

A worthy alternative is: 18.♕d1 ♕a5 (the a2-pawn is untouchable: 18...♗xc3? 19.♗xc3 ♕xa2? 20.♖b2 ♕a3 21.♘c2+–) 19.♖f3 c4 20.♘c2 cxb3 21.axb3 In this complicated position I would prefer White.

18...c4 19.bxc4 ♗xc4 20.♔h2



We have reached an interesting position where it might seem Black has succeeded in creating counterplay on the queenside with his ...c5-c4 advance. However, his position has clear drawbacks: his kingside was weakened by ...f7-f5, and his knight is poorly placed on f7. These factors will be relevant for a long time. Now Black can regain the pawn with:

20...♗xc3

Another line runs 20...♖c8 21.♘b4 ♗xe2 22.♖b3 ♕a7 23.♖c1 and the threat of ♘c6 is very powerful.

21.♗xc3 ♖xb1 22.♖xb1 ♕xa2

White whips up a dangerous initiative along the long diagonal after:

23.♕d1 ♕a7 24.♖a1 ♕b7 25.♖xa8† ♕xa8 26.♘b4

White has an attractive position.

Conclusion:

In general Black cannot rely on the sidelines in the Benko Gambit (or perhaps just for one game as a surprise weapon) as White has clear-cut routes to an advantage in almost every case. The only exception might be 9...♘fd7, where further investigation is definitely required.

In the main lines of the Benko, I hope that I have managed to find some good ideas and at this point the situation looks promising for White in the 10.♖b1 line. In my opinion the 13...♘g4 variation is a critical test for White. According to my analysis the final evaluation is rather favourable for White; nevertheless it would be interesting to see a practical test.

Chapter 15

Dutch Defence



Stonewall Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 d5

5.0–0

A) 5...♗e7 6.c4 0–0 7.♘bd2 222
A1) 7...♘c6 222
A2) 7...c6 8.♘e5 223
A21) 8...b6 224
A22) 8...♗d7 225
A23) 8...♘bd7 225
B) 5...♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.♕c2 227
B1) 8...♕e7 229
B2) 8...♗d7 229
B3) 8...♕e8 230
B4) 8...♘e4 9.♖b1 233
B41) 9...♗d7 233
B42) 9...♘d7 10.b4 234
B421) 10...♘df6 234
B422) 10..b5!? 235
B43) 9...a5 236
B44) 9...♕e7 10.b4 239
B441) 10...♗xb4 239
B442) 10...♘d7 240
B443) 10...♗d7 241
B444) 10...b5 241

The Stonewall covers a variety of ideas in the Dutch Defence, particularly when Black's pawns are on c6, d5, e6 and f5. In this chapter we shall also look at a few positions where the c-pawn does not go to c6, but in general this is the main idea.

But first I want to explain my choice of putting the knight on f3 instead of h3, as is generally recommended against the Stonewall. The issue is the following move order: 1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 c6!? Recently this has been very fashionable. It is commonly used by two big experts in the Stonewall, Grandmasters Gleizerov and Ulibin (who incidentally come from the same town).

The main point is to force White to play a move such as ♕c2, if he wants to choose the system with ♘h3, as the immediate 5.♘h3 can be met by 5...d6 with the idea of quickly playing ...e6-e5, since White's knight does not control the e5-square.

After 5.♕c2 d5 6.♘h3 a popular variation of the Stonewall arises. This was actually my first choice, but later I found another system, which I will share with the reader, to be quite interesting. It has the advantage of not having to worry about this move order issue, as we are going to develop our knight to f3 regardless. But it is good to be aware of the existence of this move order none the less.

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 d5 5.0–0



There are other move order issues, and it will always be possible to find an independent line, but hardly one with independent value. Whatever Black does, the bishop needs to go to e7 or d6 very soon. We shall thus split the chapter into line **A) 5...♗e7** and line **B) 5...♗d6**.

A) 5...♗e7 6.c4 0–0 7.♘bd2

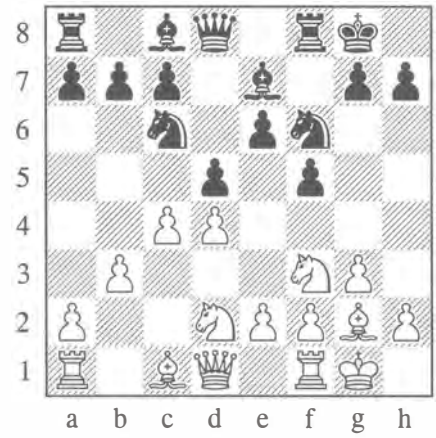
In my opinion this is the best way to fight for an opening advantage. White's play is pretty simple and effective.

Now Black can play **A1) 7...♘c6** or **A2) 7...c6**.

A1) 7...♘c6

Among all the side lines where Black refrains from playing ...c7-c6, I found that only this variation deserves attention. It was once played by Nigel Short.

8.b3



8...♘e4

I also examined:

8...a5 9.a3

It is useful to prevent possible ideas connected with the advance of the a5-pawn.

9...♗d7 10.♗b2 ♘e4

Several games have reached this position, but nobody has opted for the right plan:



11.♘e1!N

This knight is heading for d3, while the one on d2 will come to f3 and eventually to e5 under favourable circumstances. Then White will be ready to chase away Black's knight from the centre by means of f2-f3. The following illustrative line is quite typical:

11...♗f6

White was ready to meet the advance of Black's a-pawn: 11...a4 12.b4 Now it is obviously inferior for Black to capture the c4-pawn with 12...♘xd2 13.♕xd2 dxc4 since after 14.d5! White is clearly better.

12.♖c1 ♗e8 13.e3!

If 13.♘df3 then Black gets counterplay with 13...a4 14.b4 dxc4 15.♖xc4 e5!.



It is useful for White to strengthen the d4-pawn. White will continue with his plan of ♘d3, ♘f3 and so on, while Black's play is not so obvious. White's chances are clearly preferable.

9.♗b2 ♗d7 10.♘e1!

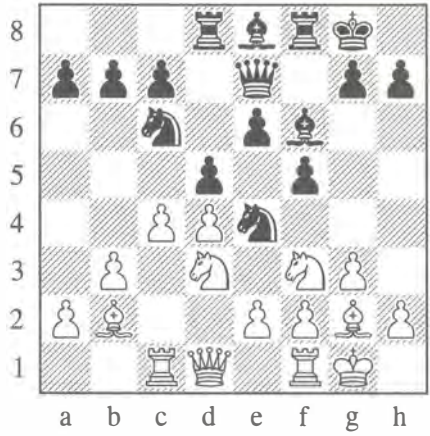
As we already know, this is the right plan.

10...♗f6 11.♘df3

White easily gained a superior position in the following encounter: 11.e3 ♘e7 12.♘d3 a5 13.f3 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 ♗c6?! 15.♘c5 ♕c8 16.e4! Kengis – Deev, Podolsk 1990.

11...♗e8 12.♖c1 ♕e7 13.♘d3 ♖d8

This position was reached in Zilberman – Press, Moscow 1979. White should have continued slowly improving his position with:



14.e3!N ♗h5 15.♕c2

White retains the better chances with a very pleasant game.

A2) 7...c6 8.♘e5

A very flexible plan; this knight will transfer to d3 and then the d2-knight comes to f3 and then perhaps e5. Afterwards White will either prepare an advance with f2-f3 and e2-e4, or start his play on the queenside.

Here Black has tried **A21) 8...b6**, **A22) 8...♗d7** and **A23) 8...♘bd7**.

A21) 8...b6

This plan is not very popular in this particular line. I suspect the main reason is the slight weakening of the e6-pawn, but in fact White can hardly use this factor. Instead I developed the following line for White:

9.♘df3 ♗b7



10.♕a4!?N

Previously 10.♕c2 has been tried, but the text seems more active to me.

10.♘g5N This might be the reason Black players refrain from 8...b6. In fact, after 10...♕c8 followed by ...♘e4 he has a perfectly playable position.

10...♘e4 11.♗e3

White prepares ♖c1.

11...c5

Otherwise it is not so easy to develop the queen's knight.

12.dxc5 bxc5

12...♗xc5 13.♗d4!?± should secure White a long-term advantage, thanks to his better pawn structure.

13.cxd5 exd5

We have reached a typical position for the Stonewall variation, with hanging pawns on c5 and d5. In this specific case White's chances seem preferable, since Black still has not completed his development and thus White has time to create threats.

14.♖ac1 ♗d6

Clearly inferior is 14...♕e8 15.♕b3! ♕c8 16.♘g5!±.

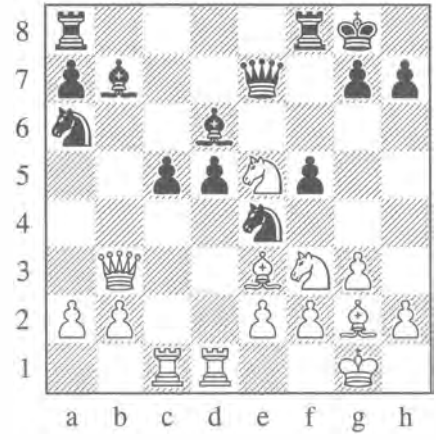
Also risky is advancing the d-pawn: 14...d4 15.♖fd1! ♗f6 (15...♗d5 runs into 16.♘xd4! cxd4 17.♖xd4+– and Black's position is hopeless) 16.♗f4 ♕d5 (16...♕e7 17.e3 dxe3 18.♗xe3 leaves White with a clear positional edge) 17.h4! White has the better chances.

15.♖fd1 ♕e7

Alternatively, 15...♖e8 is hit by the neat: 16.♘c4! ♗c7 17.♘cd2! ♘a6 18.♘xe4 ♖xe4 (or 18...fxe4 19.♘g5 d4 20.b4! and Black's centre collapses) 19.♕b3 ♖b4 20.♕a3±

16.♕b3 ♘a6

If 16...c4 then White has a fine sacrifice: 17.♘xc4! dxc4 18.♖xc4 ♔h8 19.♘g5 White has a powerful initiative, for instance: 19...♘a6 20.♘xe4 ♗xe4 21.♗xe4 fxe4 22.♖c6 ♘c5 23.♕d5 ♘b7 24.♖xd6 ♘xd6 25.♕xd6±



17.♖xd5!? ♗xd5 18.♕xd5† ♔h8 19.♘d3 ♖ad8 20.♕c4

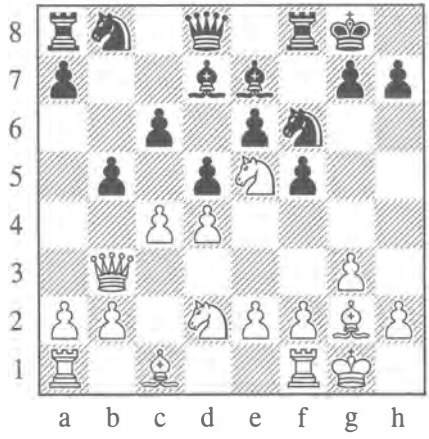
White has excellent positional compensation for the exchange.

A22) 8...♗d7

This is a thematic idea in Stonewall positions, but in this particular case White has an annoying move:

9.♕b3!? b5

If 9...♕b6 then 10.♘df3 and Black cannot continue his plan, since 10...♗e8 is met strongly by 11.♘g5!.



10.a4!?N

A surprising tactical idea; previously only 10.cxb5 has been tried.

10...bxc4

Black has two other possibilities:

10...dxc4 allows White excellent compensation after 11.♕d1 ♘d5 12.e4 fxe4 13.♘xe4.

10...b4 can be answered by 11.♘df3 ♘e4 12.♗e3 followed by ♖ac1. Black's position looks very dubious.

11.♕b7 ♕c8

We reach the same position after 11...♕b6 12.♕xa8 ♕c7, while 12...♘a6? does not work on account of 13.♘xd7 ♘xd7 14.♘xc4!+–.

12.♕xa8 ♕c7 13.♘dxc4

The even more positional 13.b3!? also comes into consideration: 13...cxb3 14.♘xb3 ♘a6 15.♕xf8† ♗xf8 16.♗f4 ♗d6 17.♘d3 ♗xf4 18.gxf4±, or 13...c3 14.♘b1 ♘a6 15.♕xf8† ♗xf8 16.♘xc3 ♕b6 17.e3 ♕xb3 18.♗d2 and White starts to penetrate along the b-file.

13...♘a6 14.♕xf8† ♗xf8 15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.♗f4 ♕b7 17.♘e5 ♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♕xb2 19.♖fb1±

I feel that in the long run the two white rooks should be stronger than Black's queen. Certainly the e2-pawn is untouchable in view of 20.♗f1.

A23) 8...♘bd7 9.♘d3



The perfect square for the knight; from here it controls the important f4- and e5-squares.

9...♘e4

This is the main continuation, but of course there are several additional options:

9...b6 10.♕a4 ♕c7 A very unfortunate square for the queen. (The lesser evil was 10...♗b7

11.♘f4 ♔f7, although after 12.♘f3 ♘e4 13.♗e3 White retains the better chances.) 11.♘f3 ♘h5 12.♗d2 This was J. Collins – Halper, New York 1958. Next White will continue with ♖ac1, underlining the misplaced position of Black's queen; White's advantage is obvious. Incidentally, White in this game was Jack Collins, the noted American chess teacher whose pupils included Bobby Fischer.

9...♕e8

This does not make much sense, since White is ready to meet the ...♕h5 jump with ♘f4. White has a comfortable advantage.

10.b3

Also good is: 10.♕c2 ♕h5 11.♘f4 ♕f7 12.cxd5! (it is always useful to force Black to recapture with the c-pawn on d5, especially when his knight is on d7) 12...cxd5 13.♘f3 ♘e4 14.♘d3 ♗d6 This is P. Varga – Kajnih, Eger 1994, and now the simple 15.♗f4 ♗xf4 16.♘xf4 would leave White with an obvious positional superiority.

10...♘e4 11.♗b2 ♗f6 12.♖c1 ♔h8 13.f3 ♘xd2

This is probably the lesser evil compared with 13...♘d6 14.e4 when White has a large advantage.

14.♕xd2 dxc4 15.bxc4 e5



This was played in Andersson – Salov, Leningrad 1987. White's edge is undeniable, and now the most accurate continuation would have been:

16.d5!N ♕e7 17.e3±

10.♕c2

White needs to defend the c4-pawn in order to continue his plan with ♘f3.

10...♘xd2

The text move is Black's first choice, but he has plenty of alternatives. However, none of them promises Black fully satisfactory play:

10...b6? is impossible here in view of 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♕c6 and Black loses material.

10...♕e8 11.♘f3 g5 This does not make much sense, as Black has no ideas on the kingside, while White slowly but surely carries out his plan. 12.♘fe5 ♕h5 13.f3 ♘d6 14.b3 ♘e8 Otherwise ♗a3 was unpleasant. 15.♗d2 ♘g7 16.♖ae1 ♘f6 17.♕c1 h6 18.♗b4 ♗xb4 19.♘xb4± White was much better in Cvitan – Sebestyen, Pula 2002.

10...♘df6 11.♘f3 ♗d7 12.♘fe5 ♗e8 13.♘f4!? Beginning concrete action. 13...♕c8 14.cxd5 exd5 15.f3 ♘d6 16.♗d2 a5 17.♖ac1 White had achieved a pleasant game in Vladimirov – Mahmud, Aden 2002.

10...♗f6 11.♘f3 ♔h8

Usually 11...♕e8 just transposes to the 11...♔h8-line after 12.b3 ♔h8.

12.b3 ♕e8 13.a4

This move was recommend by Kasparov in *Chess Informant 43*, as an improvement over his game against Short, which continued: 13.♗a3 ♖g8 14.♖ac1 a5 15.♗b2 ♕h5 16.a4± Kasparov – Short, Brussels 1987.

13...a5 14.♗a3 ♖g8 15.♘fe5

White is totally in control.

15...♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♗d8 17.f3 ♘g5 18.♗b2 ♖b8 19.♗d4 ♘f7

This was Toshkov – Batchinsky, Geneva 1989, and now the obvious:

20.e4N±

Would secure White a big advantage.

11.♗xd2 ♘f6

Black could also try 11...♗f6 12.e3 ♔h8, but after 13.♗b4 ♖e8 14.♖ac1 a5 15.♗a3± White enjoys a stable positional superiority.

12.♗f4 ♗d6

If 12...♗d7 then White can start some activity on the queenside by means of 13.a4.

13.♖ad1 ♗xf4 14.♘xf4 g5 15.♘d3±

White has managed to swap dark-squared bishops, which is one of the main positional ideas. His pieces are optimally placed and he can either play on the queenside or prepare the "programmed" e2-e4 advance in the centre, Hardicsay – Rusniok, Austria 2001.

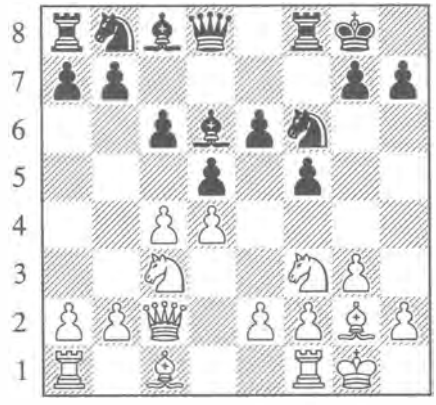
B) 5...♗d6

This is a better square for the bishop than e7, according to theory. One of the main ideas is that plans with b2-b3 and ♗a3 are less feasible, compared to when the bishop is on e7, as this square is now available for the queen. But, as we have seen, White does not need this plan in order to play for an advantage. The 5...♗d6 line has been played by many top players on occasion, but especially by Artur Yusupov, who has played this line regularly for the last 25 years with phenomenal results.

6.c4 c6

Black can play 6...0–0 with the idea of answering 7.b3 with 7...b6!? as played by the Swedish GM Karlsson. But after 7.♘c3 White would be able to play quickly with ♕b3, ♗g5 and maybe even e2-e4, making Black's intended plan seem unattractive, which must be why no one has ever tried it against 7.♘c3.

7.♘c3 0–0 8.♕c2



Here Black has a number of main options, as well as some secondary ones. It is not necessary to know them all by heart, but it is important to understand the main points of the various lines. The main options are: **B1) 8...♕e7, B2) 8...♗d7, B3) 8...♕e8**, and the main move **B4) 8...♘e4**.

The lesser options are:

8...a5 9.b3!?

White changes the direction of his play, using the fact that Black has slightly weakened his queenside.

9...♘a6 10.c5 ♗c7 11.♗f4

As we already know, exchanging the dark-squared bishops is White's main strategic idea.

11...♘d7 12.e3 h6 13.♘a4 g5 14.♗xc7 ♕xc7



White's positional advantage was obvious

in Pelletier – Kelecevic, Switzerland 1996. I have very slightly improved on White's play by preventing counterplay in the centre.

15.♕d2!N ♖e8 16.♖ac1±

Black cannot play 16...e5? because of 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘b6 ♖b8 19.♕xa5± winning a pawn.

8...dxc4

A rather principled move, but I have always felt that when Black breaks up his own pawn structure it must favour White.

9.e4 ♗e7

Black has also tried 9...♗b4, but in the following encounter White convincingly built up her advantage: 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♕e2! ♗xc3 13.bxc3 b5 14.a4 ♗b7 15.exf5 exf5 16.♘e5 a6 17.axb5 axb5 18.♖xa8 ♗xa8 19.♕a2! The penetration by White's queen proved decisive in Cmilyte – Rozhkova, Dagomys 2008.



10.exf5!N

This concrete approach seems very promising.

10...exf5 11.♕e2 b5

White is clearly better after 11...♔h8 12.♖e1 ♗d6 13.♕xc4.

12.♘e5 a6

Defending against 13.♘b5.

13.♘xc6 ♘xc6 14.♗xc6 ♖b8

An even worse version for Black is 14...♖a7 15.a4±.

15.a4 ♗d7 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗f4 ♗xc6

A necessary sacrifice; Black cannot play 17...♖b6 in view of 18.♖a8! and White wins material.

18.♕e6† ♖f7

No better is 18...♔h8 19.♗xb8 ♗d7 20.♕e5±.

19.♗xb8 ♗d7 20.♕e5 ♗c6

Black is unable to claim sufficient compensation for being an exchange down because of the following line:

21.d5! ♘xd5 22.♖fd1 ♗f6 23.♖xd5 ♗xd5 24.♕xd5 ♕xd5 25.♘xd5 ♗xb2 26.♖a8

White should convert his material advantage.

8...♘bd7

This allows White to favourably release the tension in the centre.



9.cxd5! cxd5

Recapturing with the e-pawn is impossible, because the f5-pawn would be hanging, while 9...♘xd5 10.e4 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♘b6 12.a4± led to an obvious positional advantage for White in Abregu – Araoz, Buenos Aires 1993.

10.♘b5 ♗b8 11.♗f4

White should play energetically in order to prove his advantage.

11...♗xf4 12.gxf4 ♘b6

Clearly inferior is 12...♘e8 13.♖fc1 a6 14.♘c7 ♘xc7 15.♕xc7 ♕xc7 16.♖xc7

♘f6 17.♖ac1±, as in Gabdrakhmanov – Gubajdullin, Kazan 2007.

13.♘c7 ♖b8 14.♘g5 ♕d6 15.♕c5 ♖d8



16.♖fc1!N

An obvious improvement. White failed to pose Black serious problems after 16.♕xd6 ♖xd6 17.♘b5 ♖d8 18.a4 h6 19.♘f3 ♗d7= in Bogoljubow – Tartakower, New York 1924.

16...h6 17.♕xd6 ♖xd6 18.♘f3 ♗d7 19.♘e5 ♖c8

Or 19...♗c6 20.♘a6 ♖c8 21.♘c5± and White will soon seize the initiative on the queenside.

20.e3 a6 21.♗f1 g5

If 21...♘c4 then 22.♗xc4 ♖xc7 23.♗d3!± and White is clearly better.

22.fxg5 hxg5 23.♗d3±

White has the better prospects.

B1) 8...♕e7



Black is ready to meet White's plan of ♖b1 and b2-b4, so this is the right moment to change direction.

9.♗g5!? h6

If 9...b6 10.♘e5 ♗b7 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♘b5 ♖c8 13.♕b3 ♘c6 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.♘xd6 ♕xd6 16.♖fc1 and White retains a small but stable advantage.

10.♗f4!

In my opinion, this is the strongest approach. The weakness of the g6-square might be important if White's knight reaches e5.

Black solves his problems quite comfortably after: 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 11.♖ab1 a5 12.a3 ♘d7 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 This was Huzman – Ulibin, Antwerp 1993, and now Black could have captured the pawn with: 14...dxc4 15.b5 (Black has nothing to worry about after 15.e4 e5) 15...c5 16.♘a4 cxd4 17.♕xc4 ♔h8 18.♘xd4 e5∓ Followed by 19...e4 and ...♘e5.

10...dxc4

The text move is the main continuation. Clearly inferior is 10...♗xf4 11.gxf4 dxc4 12.♘e5 ♖d8 13.e3 and White will regain the pawn with dividends.

11.♗xd6 ♕xd6 12.e4

The quiet 12.a4!? looks a reasonable alternative.

12...fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘d7 15.♖fe1 ♘f6 16.♕e5

White's compensation is indisputable.

B2) 8...♗d7

A well-known Stonewall idea – Black's light-squared bishop, which is undoubtedly his problem piece, is heading for h5 via the e8-square.



9.♖b1 ♗e8 10.b4 ♘bd7

Here or on the next move Black could play ...♘e4, which would lead to positions that will be examined in the main line.

I also analysed the pawn capture, which has yet to be tested in practice: 10...dxc4N



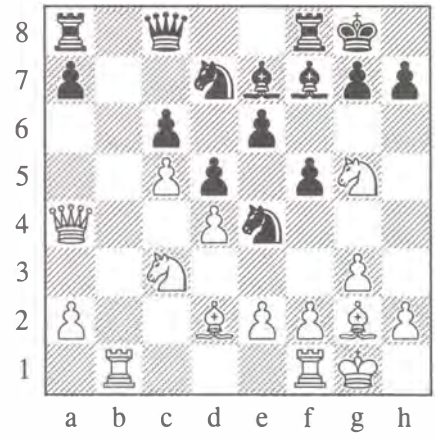
11.b5! (much worse is 11.♘d2?! b5 12.♘xb5 cxb5 13.♗xa8 ♘a6! and Black takes over the initiative) 11...♘d5 12.♘g5! ♕e7 13.e4 White has very powerful play for the pawn. For instance, 13...♘b4 14.♕a4 cxb5 15.♘xb5 a6 16.e5!, with complications that favour White.

11.b5 ♗h5 12.bxc6 bxc6 13.c5 ♗e7

I also studied 13...♗c7 when White should continue 14.♕a4 ♗a5 15.♘d1 ♖c8 16.♖b7 retaining the better chances.

14.♘g5 ♗f7 15.♕a4 ♕c8 16.♗d2 ♘e4

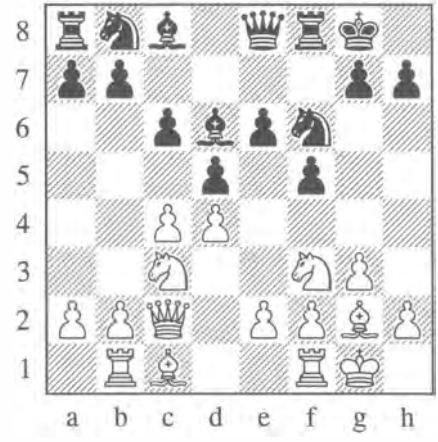
This is Drozdovskij – Wang Yue, Beijing (blitz) 2008. White could have seized the advantage with:



17.♘cxe4!N fxe4 18.♘xf7 ♖xf7 19.♗h3! ♘f8 20.♖b3 ♗f6 21.♖fb1±

It would be hard for Black to defend this position.

B3) 8...♕e8 9.♖b1



9...b5!?

An interesting attempt to close the queenside. Other options look favourable for White:

9...♘bd7 10.b4

There is no point in rushing with 10.cxd5?!

as Black can calmly recapture with the e-pawn: 10...exd5 and 11.♕xf5? loses in view of 11...♘e4.

10...a6

Once again I checked the pawn capture on c4: 10...dxc4N 11.e4 (less clear is 11.b5 ♘d5 12.bxc6 bxc6 13.e4 ♘b4 14.♕e2 ♗a6 15.♗a3 ♖b8∞) 11...fxe4 (Another line is 11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♘g5 ♘f6 14.♘xe4 ♕g6 15.♖b2! c3 16.♘xf6† ♕xf6 17.♕xc3±. White has regained the pawn and has a pleasant positional edge.) 12.♘g5! ♘b6 13.♘cxe4 ♕g6 14.a4! ♗d7 (or 14...c3 15.♕xc3 ♘fd5 16.♕e1! ♗e7 17.a5 ♘d7 18.b5±) 15.a5 ♘bd5 16.♕xc4 With a stable positional advantage.

11.a4 ♘e4

After 11...dxc4 12.♘d2 ♕e7 13.♘xc4 ♗xb4 14.a5!⩲ White's compensation is more than sufficient.

12.b5 axb5 13.axb5 h6 14.♗d2

I also like 14.♗b2!?N ♘df6 15.♘e5 with an advantage.

14...♘df6 15.♘a4 ♕h5 16.♘b6 ♖b8



17.♗b4! ♗xb4 18.♖xb4±

White's advantage is obvious, Seres – Baumegger, Budapest 1997.

9...b6 10.b4 ♗b7

This is quite a logical reaction to White's play on the queenside.

11.c5!?N

A new and interesting idea.

Black equalized comfortably after 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.b5 ♘bd7 13.♗f4 ♗xf4 14.gxf4 ♕e7 15.e3 ♖fc8 in Cmilyte – Agdestein, Gibraltar 2008.

11...♗c7 12.b5

The point of White's play is shown by the following line:

12...bxc5 13.dxc5

13.♗a3 ♘bd7 14.dxc5 is just a transposition.

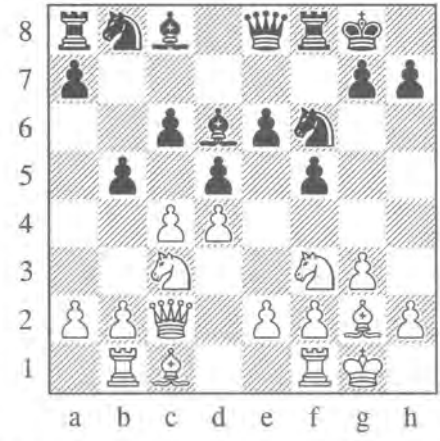
13...♘bd7 14.♗a3

White has no advantage after: 14.♘d4 ♘xc5 15.♗a3 ♗b6 16.bxc6 ♗xc6 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.♘xd5 ♗xd4 19.♘xf6† ♗xf6 20.♗xc6 ♖c8=

14...♘e5 15.♘d4 ♘c4 16.♗c1±

A complex and double-edged position has arisen, but White's activity should give him the better prospects.

9...♕h5 This idea does not really work, since White simply continues his play on the queenside: 10.b4 ♘bd7 (inferior is 10...dxc4 11.b5 ♘d5 12.♘d2! and White regains the pawn with dividends) 11.b5 dxc4 12.bxc6 bxc6 This was Patelli – Schlichthaar, Arco 2000, and now the simple 13.♕a4 would give White a good edge.



10.b3!N

I originally intended to follow White's play in the main game that is known here, as he won a good game. I was thinking that White is just a bit better everywhere, but Jacob Aagaard had some recommendations deep into the middlegame in his book *The Stonewall Dutch* that I did not want to spend time on. However, they did make me look for a second time at the position, which allowed me to spot White's real problem.

This problem, and the fact that it makes more sense to try to attack the b5-pawn directly and open the queenside to gain a space advantage, made for a last-minute revision. My "old" line was: 10.cxb5 cxb5 11.♗f4 ♗xf4 12.gxf4 ♗d7 13.b4 This was played in Schandorff – L.B. Hansen, Denmark 1997. Here I do not see any advantage for White after: 13...♘c6!N (13...a6 14.e3 ♘c6 15.♘e1 ♖c8 16.♘d3± was the game) 14.♖fc1 ♕e7 15.a3 ♖fc8=

10...♗a6

After 10...♘e4 White can also jump in with his knight with 11.♘e5, having in mind two ideas: exchanging on e4 followed by f2-f3, or ♗f4.

11.c5 ♗c7 12.a4!



12...bxa4

Black can also try:

12...b4 13.♘a2 ♗a5 14.♕d1!

A very strong move; White not only defends the e2-pawn, preparing ♗d2, but also vacates the c2-square for the manoeuvre ♘e1-c2.

The forcing sequence 14.♗d2 ♗xe2 15.♖fe1 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♘e4 17.♗xb4 ♗xb4 18.♘xb4 a5 19.♘d3 ♘a6 helps Black, who can hold the balance here.

After the text move the following sample line illustrates White's advantage:

14...♖f7

The main point of White's idea can be seen in the following line: 14...♘bd7 15.♗d2 ♖b8 (15...♕b8 loses a pawn to 16.♕e1) 16.♗f4! Followed by ♗d6, winning the exchange, since ...♖f7 would run into ♘g5.

15.♘e1 e5

A logical attempt; Black intends to generate counterplay in the centre.

16.♘c2 exd4 17.♕xd4 ♕xe2 18.♘axb4 ♕g4 19.♕xg4 fxg4 20.♘xa6 ♘xa6 21.b4!±

White is clearly better.

13.♘xa4

In this complex middlegame position White's chances are slightly better, thanks to his better pawn structure, which should be an important factor in the long run. The following is a sample line:

13...♘bd7 14.♘c3 ♘e4

Black is not ready to open the centre with 14...e5. After 15.♖a1 ♗b7 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘d4 ♘e4 18.♘xe4 fxe4 19.f3! White is clearly better.

15.♖a1 ♗b7

If 15...♕c8 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♘g5 ♖f6 18.f3! and White opens the h1-a8 diagonal in his favour.

16.♗f4

As always, swapping the dark-squared bishops is White's main positional idea.

16.b4!? could also be tried. Maybe White is slightly better, but Black is certainly very solid.

16...♗xf4

If 16...e5 then White has the strong 17.♘xd5! cxd5 18.c6 ♗xc6 19.♕xc6 exf4 20.♕xc7 fxg3 21.hxg3± with a positional edge.

17.gxf4±

Although Black has a very solid position, I prefer White's chances due to two factors: his better pawn structure and the passivity of Black's bishop.

B4) 8...♘e4

This is by far Black's most important option.

9.♖b1

White prepares to advance his b-pawn.



This is the starting position of the more important half of this chapter. White intends to push his b-pawn to create weaknesses in Black's queenside. If White is successful with this plan, Black will be condemned to a passive defence. His main options are: **B41) 9...♗d7**, **B42) 9...♘d7**, **B43) 9...a5** and **B44) 9...♕e7**.

B41) 9...♗d7 10.b4 ♗e8 11.b5 ♘d7



A very important position has arisen. Black has made natural developing moves while White has made some progress on the queenside. Right now, White has to decide between several plans. In my opinion, in the following encounter White opted for the best line.

12.bxc6 bxc6 13.♘xe4 fxe4

Recapturing with the other pawn is favourable for White after 13...dxe4 14.♘g5 ♖f6 15.f3, as White opens up the play advantageously.

14.♘g5 ♖f6 15.c5 ♗c7 16.f4

I believe this is the correct idea, as it is very important for White to prevent Black's idea of ...e6-e5. I also considered 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♗xe4, but this leads to a double-edged position.

16...h6 17.♘h3 ♗h5

This position occurred in Chekhov – Yusupov, Germany 1993, and now is the right time to improve on White's play. Instead of placing his bishop on e3, White should play:

18.♘f2!N ♕c8 19.e3

White's kingside is more or less secure, and now he can try to develop his play on the

queenside. I evaluate White's position as more promising, for example:

19...♖b8 20.♖xb8 ♗xb8 21.♖e1

Vacating the f1-square for the bishop.

21...♖f8

If 21...g5 then White has an interesting sacrifice at his disposal: 22.♘xe4! dxe4 23.♕xe4 White will also win the c6-pawn and his pawn chain will become very dangerous.

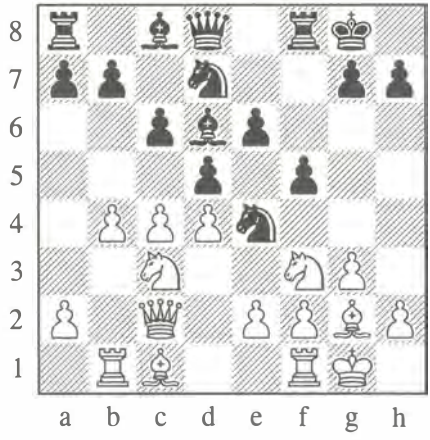
22.♗f1 ♘f6 23.♕a4±

White has an easy plan to seize the initiative, which includes ♗d2, ♖b1, ♗a6 and so on.

B42) 9...♘d7

A natural idea to bring his second knight into the game.

10.b4



Here we have a further branching point.

B421) 10...♘df6 11.c5!

A remarkable moment; White avoids the natural-looking 11.b5, since it would allow Black to force favourable simplifications: 11...♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5! 13.c5 (13.♖xb5 b6! also does not promise White much) 13...♘e4 14.♕c2 ♗e7 15.♖xb5 b6! 16.cxb6 ♗d7 17.♖b2 axb6= Stefansson – Radjabov, Torshavn 2000.

However, worthy of consideration was:
11.♘e5!? ♕c7

In the event of 11...♘xc3 12.♕xc3 ♘e4 13.♕c2 White retains an advantage.



12.♗f4!N

This move is clearly stronger than 12.f3 ♘xc3 13.♕xc3 b6 14.c5?! ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♘d7 16.♗f4 bxc5 17.bxc5 ♗a6 when Black was already better in J. Szabo – Hajnal, Hungary 1997.

12...♘xc3

Black also fails to solve his opening problems by: 12...g5 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.c5 (14.♗c1!?) 14...gxf4 15.cxd6 ♘xd6 16.gxf4 White keeps a stable positional edge.

13.♕xc3 ♘h5 14.♗e3 ♘f6 15.♖fc1 ♘e4 16.♕b2±

White enjoys a pleasant game.

11...♗c7 12.♗f4

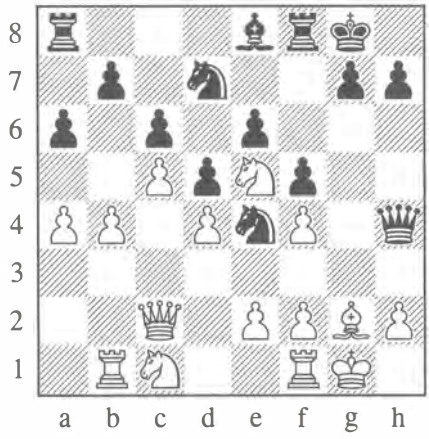
The following encounter is a very good illustration of what might happen in this type of position:

12...♗xf4 13.gxf4 ♗d7 14.♘e5 ♗e8 15.a4 a6 16.♘a2!

A strong positional idea; White not only creates the threat of trapping Black's knight by 17.f3, but also transfers his knight to d3.

16...♘d7 17.♘c1 ♕h4

It is very important that Black cannot play 17...♘xe5, since after 18.dxe5 d4 (otherwise f2-f3 would trap the knight) 19.♘a2± Black is going to lose his d-pawn.



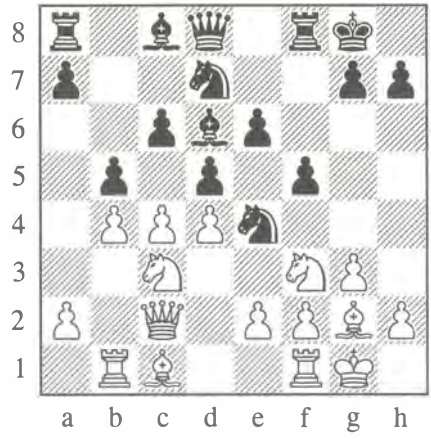
18.e3!N

In my opinion 18.♘cd3, as in Grabuzova – Burchardt, Germany 1995, is not so accurate, since it allows Black to create counterplay with 18...♘xe5! 19.dxe5 d4.

18...♘ef6 19.♘b3! ♗h5 20.♘a5±

White retains a long-term advantage.

B422) 10...b5!?



This very interesting attempt to stop White's queenside offensive was recommended in *Win with the Stonewall Dutch*. After some time analysing the position, I found an aggressive way to deal with this line.

11.cxb5 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5

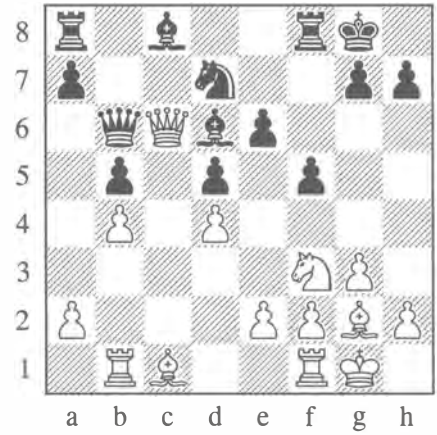
In my opinion the critical continuation is:

13.♕c6!N

13.♗g5 has been played, but after 13...♕b6 14.♖fc1 ♗b7 15.♕e3 ♖fe8 16.♗f4 ♗xf4 17.gxf4 ♕d6 18.♘e5 ♖ac8 Black equalized easily in Kerek – C. Horvath, Aggtelek 1997.

13...♕b6

The point of Black's idea – the white queen is going to be trapped on a8.



14.♕xa8!!

But we are not frightened of this trap – there are opportunities for White here as well.

Now Black is at a crossroads. He must decide which minor piece to place on b8, since I believe the position with two rooks versus queen, which might appear after 14...♗b7 15.♕xf8†, is favourable for White in the long run.

14...♗b8

The alternative is:

14...♘b8 15.♘g5!

An important tactical idea.

15...♘c6

After 15...♗b7 16.♕xb7 ♕xb7 17.♘xe6 ♖e8 18.♘c5 ♕f7 19.e3 White is clearly better due to the permanent weakness on d5.



16.a3!

White is ready to play ♕xc8 next.

16...♗d7 17.♕xf8† ♗xf8 18.e3

More accurate than 18.♖d1 a5 19.bxa5 ♘xa5, as in this case Black has good counterplay.

18...a5 19.♗d2!

White is better.

15.♘g5 ♗b7

The other option is:

15...♘f6

Now White has a strong move:

16.♖b3! ♗b7

Practically forced, as 16...h6 loses to 17.♘xe6! ♗xe6 18.♖c3, and White's queen escapes.

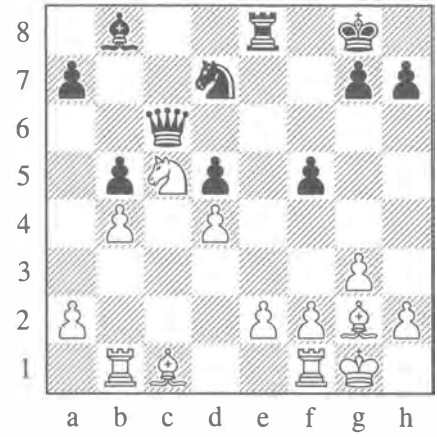
17.♕xb7 ♕xb7 18.♘xe6 ♖e8 19.♘c5 ♕f7 20.e3!±

In my opinion White has the better chances, as he will slowly prepare to open up the position on the queenside, or penetrate along the c-file, while Black is rather passive.

It should be noted that 15...♖e8 loses in one go to 16.♗xd5!.

16.♕xb7 ♕xb7 17.♘xe6 ♖e8 18.♘c5 ♕c6

Certainly 18...♘xc5? would be a serious mistake in this case, as after 19.dxc5 ♖xe2 20.♖d1 Black's central pawn is falling and White gains a strategically winning position, since his c-pawn should decide the issue.



Now White has a pleasant choice between two options:

19.♗f3 ♘b6 20.♖b3 ♘c4 (20...g6 21.♖a3!?±) 21.♖c3 Followed by opening the a-file with a2-a4.

19.♘xd7 ♕xd7 20.e3 ♖c8 21.♗b2 ♖c4 22.♖fc1±

In either case only White can play for a win.

B43) 9...a5 10.a3



Once again we have reached a very important position where Black has a wide choice.

10...♕e7

The natural attempt to prevent White's idea. Other possibilities are:

10...♘xc3?! This is rarely a good idea when White has the opportunity of recapturing with the b-pawn. 11.bxc3! a4 (White easily regains the pawn after 11...dxc4 12.♘d2 b5 13.a4!±) 12.c5 ♗e7 13.c4 ♘d7 14.♗d2 ♔h8 15.♖b4± White was clearly better in Kozlov – Yagupov, Alushta 2002.

10...b6 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 ♗a6

This whole concept is probably wrong.

13.b5 cxb5 14.♘xb5 ♗xb5 15.♖xb5 ♕c7



16.♘g5!

After this strong move White's advantage becomes clear.

16...♖c8?

This allows an attractive refutation.

A better try was 16...♘xg5 17.♗xg5 h6, although after 18.♗d2 ♘d7 19.♖c1 ♖ac8 20.♕a2 dxc4 21.e3±, followed by 22.♗f1, White's advantage is indisputable.

17.♘xe6 ♕d7 18.♖xd5 ♕xe6 19.♖xf5! ♖e8 20.♖e5!+–

White was winning in Urban – Tazbir, Lubniewice 2002.

10...♘d7



11.c5!?N

By analogy with line B42 (9...♘d7) this move looks very logical to me.

Also worth considering is: 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 ♘df6 13.c5 (Again 13.b5 allows Black to simplify favourably, just like in the 9...♘d7-line. 13...♘xc3 14.♕xc3 cxb5 15.♖xb5 ♗d7! 16.♖xb7 ♕c8! with equality, Grabuzova – Zaitseva, Moscow 1992.) 13...♗c7 14.b5!?

11...♗c7 12.♗f4 ♗xf4 13.gxf4

In my opinion White's chances are preferable in this kind of position, for example:

13...b6 14.cxb6 ♕xb6 15.♘a4 ♕c7 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.fxe5 ♗a6 18.f3 ♘g5 19.♘c5

With a solid positional advantage.

11.b4

This move works well for White, but again 11.c5 ♗c7 12.♗f4 ♗xf4 13.gxf4 deserves attention, as in Pichugin – Savchenko, Odessa 2003.

11...axb4 12.axb4 ♗xb4

The most challenging continuation. Other possibilities are:

12...♗d7 is not great: 13.c5 ♗c7 14.♗f4 ♗xf4 15.gxf4± Grabuzova – Zaitseva, Orel 1993.

12...♘xc3

This move cannot be recommended, as Black exchanges his most active piece, thus

significantly easing White's task.

13.♕xc3 dxc4?!

This is already a serious inaccuracy.

Black was obliged to choose 13...b5 14.c5 ♗c7± with a passive, but still pretty sound, position.

14.♕xc4 ♖a4 15.♗g5! ♕c7 16.♘e1!?

White had many other attractive options, but the text is good enough. The knight is heading for the ideal d3-square; White's advantage is obvious.

16...b5 17.♕c3



This position was reached in Blagojevic – Podinic, Bijelo Polje 2005. In my opinion White is clearly better, but in the book *Win with the Stonewall Dutch* there is a strange recommendation of improving Black's play by means of:

17...h6N

I think White keeps all his pluses after:

18.♗e3 e5 19.dxe5 ♗xe5 20.♕b3† ♕f7 21.♕xf7† ♔xf7 22.♘d3 ♗f6 23.♘c5 ♖a2 24.♗f4! ♗e6 25.e4 ♗c4 26.♖fd1 fxe4 27.♘xe4

The endgame is very unpleasant for Black.

12...♘d7 13.b5 ♘df6

The alternatives are worse:

After 13...♔h8 White should not rush with 14.♗f4, as happened in Gleizerov – Moroz, Lubniewice 1994, since this allows 14...♗xf4 15.gxf4 ♖a3! with counterplay. He just needs to continue with the calm 16.♗b2 or 16.♗d2 and then, depending on the situation, either ♖a1 or ♘a4. White's chances are preferable in either case.

13...♘xc3 As was already mentioned above, this exchange clearly favours White. 14.♕xc3 ♖a4 15.♗g5 ♕e8 This position arose in Budnikov – Gnidash, Kharkov 2000, and now the simple 16.c5 ♗c7 17.♕b3± would leave White with a serious advantage.

14.c5 ♗c7



So far this is Pligin – Knight, Telechess 2007, and here I found the following improvement:

15.b6!?N ♗b8 16.♗f4

It seems to me White retains a small but long-lasting advantage, for instance:

16...♗xf4 17.gxf4 ♘xc3 18.♕xc3 ♘e4 19.♕c2 ♗d7 20.♖a1±

White will place one of his rooks on a7, and then try to get his knight to a5. It is also important that he has the option of breaking through in the centre with f2-f3 and e2-e4.

So, in general, White has pleasant almost risk-free play, while Black, despite having a pretty sound position, is doomed to passive defence.

12...b5

A thematic idea, but it certainly cannot promise Black equality:

13.cxb5 ♘xc3 14.♕xc3 cxb5 15.♗f4 ♗xf4

16.gxf4 ♘a6

The more natural 16...♗d7 also fails to equalize, since White keeps definite pressure after 17.♕c5! ♘c6 18.♕xe7 ♘xe7 19.♘e5 ♖fd8 20.♖fc1±.

17.♘e5 ♗b7



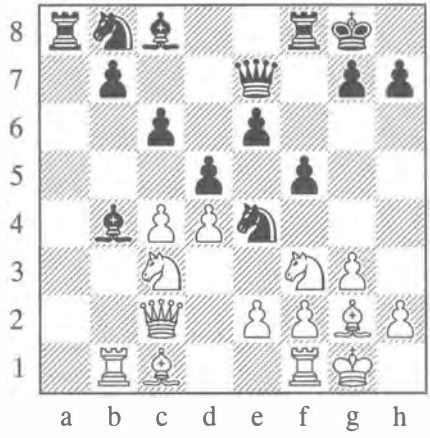
In Hobuss – Kaenel, Zurich 1999, White missed a strong idea:

18.♕d3!N ♘c7

Also 18...♖fb8 19.♖fc1 ♘xb4 20.♕d2! ♘a6 21.♖xb5 ♖c8 22.♖cb1 ♖c7 23.♖b6± does not promise Black relief.

19.♖fc1

It is not so easy to defend for Black, for instance: 19...♖a2 20.♖c5 followed by 21.♖bc1.



13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♗g5

The point of White's sacrifice; now Black has to give up his dark-squared bishop.

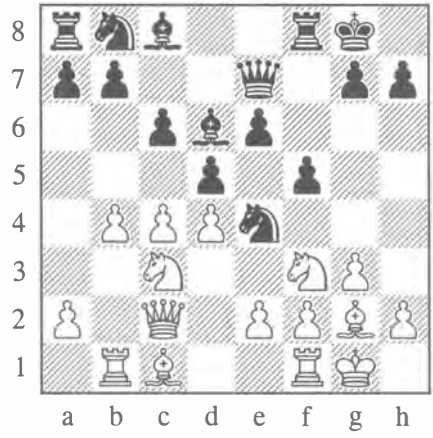
14...♕d7 15.♖xb4 exf3 16.exf3

In my opinion this is the correct recapture, as it opens the e-file for White's second rook and Black's e6-pawn becomes a target.

16...♕xd4 17.♖bb1 ♘d7 18.♗e7 ♖e8 19.♖fd1 ♕a7 20.♗d6▫

There is no doubt White has sufficient compensation for the pawn, thanks to his bishop pair and Black's passivity, I. Novikov – Moskalenko, Cap d'Agde 1994.

B44) 9...♕e7 10.b4



We have reached our final branching point. In this position Black has an additional four options: **B441) 10...♗xb4**, **B442) 10...♘d7**, **B443) 10...♗d7** and **B444) 10...b5**.

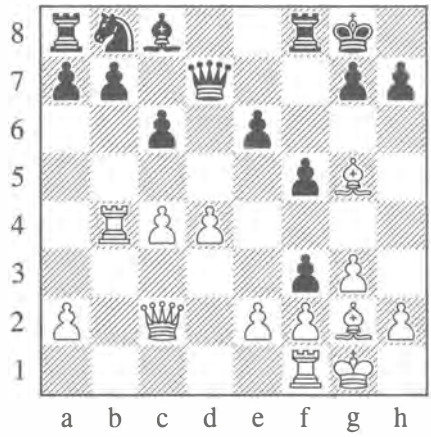
Instead 10...a6 11.a4 ♘d7 12.b5 axb5 13.axb5 would transpose to a position examined in line B43 (the 9...a5 10.a3 ♕e7 line).

B441) 10...♗xb4

Here Black has a worse version of the position we have already seen in the 9...a5 10.a3 ♕e7 line.

11.♘xe4 dxe4 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.♖xb4 exf3

So far this is Sakalauskas – Samolins, Lithuania 2003, and now much stronger would have been:



14.exf3!N

With the following illustrative line:

14...♕xd4 15.♗e7 ♖e8 16.♖d1 ♕e5 17.f4 ♕a5

Or 17...♕c7 18.♗d6 ♕f7 19.♗xb8 and White regains the pawn, while retaining clear positional superiority: 19...c5 20.♖a4 ♖xb8 21.♖xa7 ♕c7 22.♕c3±

18.♖a4 ♕c7 19.♗d6±

Once again White gets the pawn back with a positional edge.

B442) 10...♘d7 11.b5 ♘df6

Inferior is 11...♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5 13.cxd5! exd5 14.♖xb5 ♘b6 15.♘e5 ♗e6 as in Matveeva – B. Thipsay, Jakarta 1993. Now the natural 16.♗f4!N would secure White's advantage, for instance: 16...g5 17.♗d2 f4 18.♕a5 ♗xe5 19.dxe5 ♘c4 20.♕b4!±

12.c5

Once again this plan works very well for White. An interesting alternative might be 12.bxc6 bxc6 13.♘e5!?.

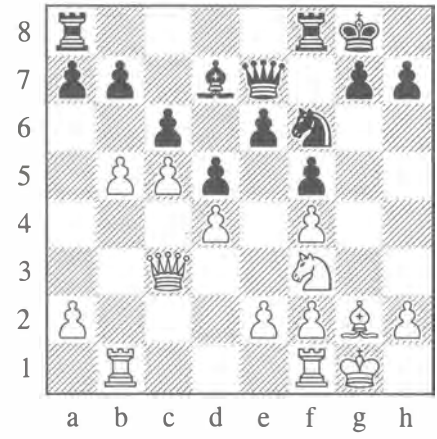
12...♗c7 13.♗f4!

A natural follow-up of White's plan.

13...♗xf4

Black quickly ended up in a strategically difficult position in the following encounter: 13...♘xc3 14.♕xc3 ♘e4 15.♕e3 ♗xf4 16.gxf4 ♗d7 17.bxc6 ♗xc6 18.♘e5 g5 19.f3 gxf4 20.♕xf4 ♘c3 21.♖b2± Gual Pascual – Moncayo Romero, Barcelona 2001.

14.gxf4 ♘xc3 15.♕xc3 ♗d7



16.a4!

It is absolutely the right idea to keep up the pressure, since after 16.bxc6 ♗xc6 17.♘e5 ♕c7 it might be very difficult to break through.

16...♘e4

The following defensive plan was given by GM Roiz in *ChessBase Magazine* 100: 16...♖fc8 17.♘e5 ♗e8 18.♖b3 ♖c7 Now after 19.♖fb1 it would be very hard to hold Black's passive position.

17.♕c2 ♖fc8 18.♘e5 ♗e8 19.♗xe4!?

An interesting positional solution. White keeps his strong knight against Black's passive bishop, which gives him a long-term edge.

Another idea was to continue improving his position with 19.♖b3 followed by ♖fb1.

19...dxe4

The best choice.

After 19...fxe4 20.f3 b6 (This is the only attempt to gain counterplay, as otherwise Black's position is lost. For example, 20...exf3 21.♖xf3 and White's attack on the kingside should win easily.) 21.bxc6 ♗xc6 22.cxb6 ♗e8 23.b7! ♕xb7 24.♖xb7 ♖xc2 25.fxe4 dxe4 26.♔f2± The endgame is very difficult for Black.

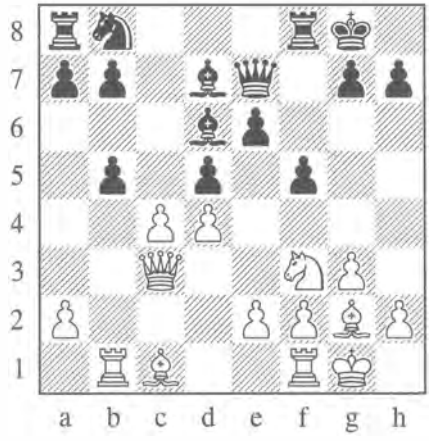
This position was reached in Schandorff – Sandner, Germany 2004, and now I believe White should not rush with 20.f3, as happened in the game. I prefer the calm suggestion made by Michael Roiz:

20.♔h1!

Followed by doubling rooks on the g-file. Black's position is very passive as he lacks any real counterplay.

B443) 10...♗d7 11.b5 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5

This has been tried quite often.



13.cxd5!

The only way to fight for an advantage. Black has a comfortable game after 13.cxb5 ♖c8 14.♕d3 a6= as in Mattick – Gleizerov, Berlin 1996.

13...exd5

Clearly worse is 13...b4 14.♕b3 a5 15.♘e5!± as in Hoang Thanh Trang – Zimina, St Petersburg 2009.

14.♘e5! ♗c6

This allows an elegant tactical refutation:

15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♖xb5! ♔h8

If 16...cxb5 17.♗xd5† ♔h8 18.♗xa8 ♕xe2 19.♗a3! ♕e7 20.♖e1 ♕f6 21.♗d5± and White is much better.

17.♖b2±

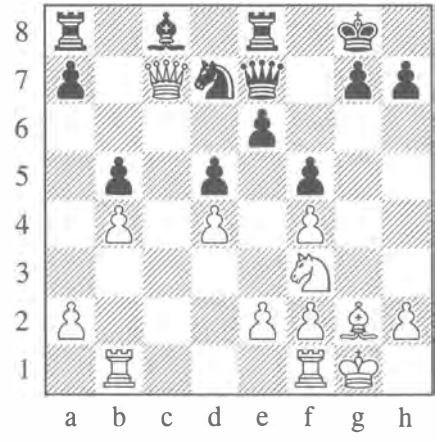
White's positional advantage is self-evident, Baryshpolets – Shumilov, Kiev 2005.

B444) 10...b5

This move was played in a recent grandmaster game.

11.cxb5 ♘xc3 12.♕xc3 cxb5 13.♗f4 ♗xf4 14.gxf4 ♘d7 15.♕c7! ♖e8

This position occurred in Golod – Ulibin, Biel 2009. White now overlooked a very strong idea:



16.♕a5!N a6 17.♖fc1

Now Black's knight cannot come to b6.

17...♖b8

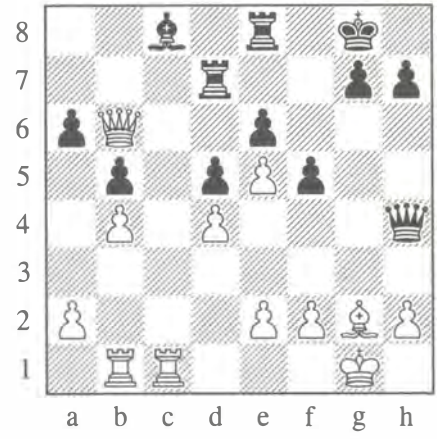
I also examined 17...♘f6 18.♘e5 ♗d7

19.♖c7 ♖ec8 20.♖bc1± when White is totally in control.

18.♘e5

After 18.♖c7 ♕d8 19.♘e5 ♘b6 20.♖c6 ♘c4 21.♕xd8 ♖xd8 22.e3± White has the better chances, as he can eliminate Black's knight at a suitable moment.

18...♘xe5 19.fxe5 ♕h4 20.♕c7 ♖b7 21.♕c6 ♖d7 22.♕b6



White has the advantage thanks to his control of the c-file.

Conclusion:

The Stonewall Dutch is often successful for Black in practice, simply because it is a reasonable opening, despite some positional drawbacks. I do not know of a clear-cut path to an advantage for White in the main lines, which is why I have proposed an interesting alternative that looks promising.

Chapter 16

Dutch Defence



Classical Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0–0

6.0–0

A) 6...♕e8 244
B) 6...♘e4 245
C) 6...d6 7.♘c3 246
C1) 7...♘c6!? 246
C2) 7...a5 8.b3 249
C21) 8...♘a6 249
C22) 8...♘e4 249
C3) 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 fxe4 9.♘d2 d5 10.f3! 251
C31) 10...exf3 252
C32) 10...♘c6 252
C4) 7...♕e8 8.b3 253
C41) 8...♘c6 253
C42) 8...♘bd7 254
C43) 8...c6 255
C44) 8...♕h5 255
C45) 8...a5 9.♗b2 256
C451) 9...♘c6 257
C452) 9...♕h5 257
C453) 9...c6 258
C454) 9...♘a6 259

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4 ♗e7

The variation involving the development of the black bishop on e7 is considered to be slightly passive and is seldom played at grandmaster level. White should have good chances to secure an opening advantage with accurate play. At the same time Black's position contains considerable dynamic potential, and his resources should not be underestimated. One cannot help but pay attention to the efforts of the English GM Simon Williams, a specialist in this opening who has won many fine attacking games with it. Thus I recommend that you study the recommendations in this chapter closely, in order to avoid the kind of murky, double-edged positions that Black hopes to reach.

Before we begin dealing with specific variations, I will offer a few very general guidelines. In most variations White's main plan will involve the preparation of the central thrust e2-e4, while Black will be aiming for ...e6-e5. Both sides will generally try to carry out their own e-pawn advance while obstructing that of the opponent. Overall it seems to me that White is better equipped to succeed in this battle, and you can find plenty of strong recommendations, including some of my own original ideas, throughout the chapter.

5.♘f3 0–0 6.0–0



This is our first branching point, though I should stress that **A) 6...♕e8** and **B) 6...♘e4** are far less serious lines than the main move, **C) 6...d6**.

Many other moves are of course legal, for example:

6...b6

This would not be such a bad idea if Black could secure control over the central squares d5 and e4, but White strikes first:

7.d5! exd5

Somewhat stronger is 7...♗b7, although White's chances are better after 8.♘c3.

8.cxd5

8.♘h4!? would be an interesting alternative.

8...♘e4 9.♘d4

There is no point for White to enter the complications resulting from 9.d6 ♗xd6 10.♕d5† ♔h8 11.♕xa8 ♘c6.

9...♘d6 10.♘c3±

White has an obvious positional advantage, Turzo – Mihalko, Hungary 2004.

A playable alternative is 6...c6 7.♘bd2 d5 (I do not see much point in 7...d6, since after 8.♕c2 White is ready to play e2-e4 next) 8.♘e5, and we have a position examined in the Stonewall chapter.

A) 6...♕e8

Black begins a thematic manoeuvre for this variation, but I do not see much point in doing it without first moving the d-pawn.

7.♘c3 ♕h5 8.d5!

Not only gaining space in the centre, but also disturbing Black's coordination.

8...♘a6

I found four practical examples of this position on my database, but so far nobody seems to have tried the strongest move:



9.♗f4!N

It seems to me that White maintains a clear advantage after this move, for instance:

9...d6 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 11.♘d4 ♗c8 12.♘db5

It is very hard for Black to deal with the pressure on the queenside.

B) 6...♘e4 7.♘bd2 ♗f6

If 7...d5 8.b3 ♘c6 9.♗b2 we reach a position from the Stonewall chapter.

8.b3 ♘c6

Black has often succeeded in obtaining a good position after:

8...c5 9.♗b2 ♘c6

The main reason for that is that White has often reacted with the slightly passive 10.e3 after which 10...d5 is fully satisfactory for Black. Instead White should immediately address the problem of Black's annoying knight:

10.♕c2! ♘b4!?

This looks like a principled attempt to disrupt the white position, but it does not equalize. After 10...d5 11.dxc5 ♗xb2 12.♕xb2 ♘xc5 13.♖fd1 White has a pleasant edge.

The game Schroeder – Knoche, Germany 1993, continued 10...♘xd2 11.♕xd2 d6 12.♖ad1 ♕a5 13.♕xa5 ♘xa5 14.♖d2 and Black faced a difficult defensive task with no real prospects for counterplay.

11.♕c1 cxd4 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♘xd4 d5

We have been following the game Backwinkel – Haub, Germany 2001. Here I suggest:

14.♘b5 ♗d7 15.♗xf6 ♖xf6 16.♘c3±

White exerts unpleasant pressure against the enemy centre.

9.♗b2



9...d6

Again Black has the option of entering a Stonewall structure:

9...d5

Although this is quite playable, I believe this kind of position is almost always pleasant and slightly better for White, the present case being a good example.

10.e3 ♗d7 11.♘e1

A thematic idea in such positions.

11...a5 12.f3 ♘xd2

Somewhat stronger was 12...♘d6, although White keeps a pleasant game: 13.♘d3±

13.♕xd2 ♗e8 14.♘d3 ♕e7 15.f4!?

Usually White refrains from this move, but here it is more tempting, as Black's knight is a long way from e4.

15...♖d8 16.♖fc1 dxc4?!

It was better to maintain the pawn on d5 and keep the h1-a8 diagonal closed.

17.♖xc4

White was clearly better in Gozzoli – Pytel, La Fere 2007.

10.♘e1!

It is important to challenge Black's strong knight.

10...♘xd2

There is not much logic in moving the d-pawn for the second time, as the extra move ♘e1 is almost always useful for White in the Stonewall structure. After 10...d5 11.e3 b6 12.♘d3 ♗b7 13.♘f4 ♖e8 14.♘xe4! dxe4 15.f3 exf3 16.♕xf3 ♘a5 17.♕f2 ♗xg2 18.♕xg2 White clearly has the initiative, Prohaszka – Bui Vinh, Budapest 2008.

Black has also tried the somewhat passive 10...♘g5, but White's play in the following encounter was pretty convincing: 11.f4 ♘f7 12.e3 e5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.d5 ♘e7 15.e4 with a comfortable edge in Tregubov – Williams, Reykjavik 2006.

11.♕xd2 e5

Black can also hold the e-pawn back with 11...♕e7, which forces an accurate response. 12.f4! (12.e4 e5∞ is rather double-edged) 12...♗d7 13.e4 fxe4 14.♗xe4 g6 15.♘f3 and White was clearly better in Sen – Stephenson, Coulsdon 2006.



12.♗d5†!N

This is an important improvement over the game Kveinys – Bleis, Triesen 2004, in which White took on c6 immediately. The king on h8 will be further away from the centre in case of an endgame, and may also be slightly susceptible to back rank tricks.

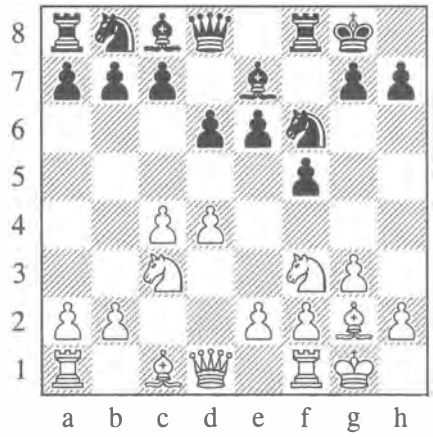
12...♔h8 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♕a5! e4 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♘g2

White has an obvious positional superiority, thanks to his better pawn structure.

C) 6...d6

This is Black's most important line by far.

7.♘c3



This is the basic starting position of the Classical Dutch and, as usually occurs, an important crossroads. We will examine four main options: **C1) 7...♘c6!?**, **C2) 7...a5**, **C3) 7...♘e4** and **C4) 7...♕e8**. This chapter is an exception from the way most chapters in this book are structured, in that I consider variation C3 to be the most theoretically critical line. Nevertheless there is no doubt that line C4 is the absolute main line in terms of popularity.

C1) 7...♘c6!?

This move does not have the best reputation, and in the original draft of this chapter I only included is as a side variation. However, not long before publication the Quality Chess team informed me that this line had been featured in a recent *Dangerous Weapons* book, with Classical Dutch expert, GM Simon Williams making the case for the black side. This prompted me to take a more detailed look at it, and I suggest that the reader does the same as the resulting positions are rather unorthodox and tricky to handle. The good news is that White can look forward to a nice advantage if he can navigate the complications successfully.

8.d5!

This is of course the critical test.

8...♘e5

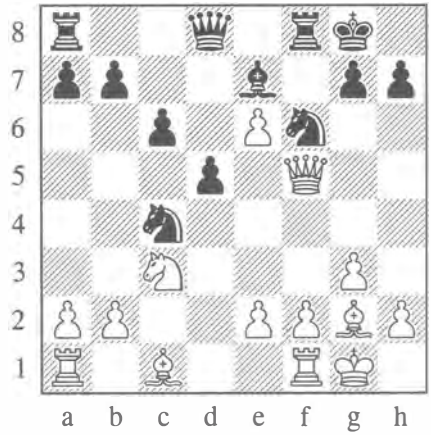
8...♘a5 9.♘g5 ♘xc4 10.♘xe6 transposes, while after 8...exd5 9.cxd5 ♘e5 10.♘d4! White's advantage is obvious.

9.♘d4! ♘xc4

9...exd5 10.cxd5 reaches the previous note.

10.♘xe6 ♗xe6 11.dxe6 c6 12.♕d3 d5 13.♕xf5

Black's previous few moves have been more or less forced, but now he has quite a wide choice, although strangely enough only one option seems to have been tried in practice.



13...♗c5!?

This untested move seems to be Williams' top choice, although he also pays close attention to the last of the following four alternatives. Before analysing any variations, I would like to emphasize a few general points. For the time being White has an extra pawn, but Black has fair chances to regain the pawn on e6. If he can do this while retaining a firm grip over the central light squares, he will generally be doing well. In many positions, the best policy for White is to avoid becoming too preoccupied with the defence of the e6-pawn, and instead focus his efforts on preparing the move e2-e4, eroding the enemy centre and increasing the scope of the unopposed bishop on g2. If White can get this piece working properly then he will almost always stand better, even in a position with equal material.

Let us now see how these ideas might play out over the board.

So far the only option to have been tested is the natural but incorrect: 13...♘e4?! 14.♕g4 ♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♗f6 16.♖b1 ♘d6



This was Najer – Gavritenkov, Krasnodar 1997. Now after the natural 17.e4!N White's advantage is beyond any doubt.

Williams briefly considers 13...♗b4, but concludes that White stands better after 14.♕d3!. It is absolutely normal for White to

retreat the queen either to this square or c2, in order to prepare the following pawn break. 14...♕e8 15.e4! ♗xc3 16.♕xc3 ♕xe6 17.exd5 cxd5 18.♖e1 ♕f7 19.♕d4 Material is equal, but White has two bishops versus two knights and an obvious target on d5.

It is a similar story after 13...♗d6 14.♕c2! ♕e7 15.e4 ♕xe6 (15...d4? loses a pawn after 16.♘e2) 16.exd5 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 cxd5 18.♕d3 (analysis by Williams). Black has regained his pawn, but positionally he is in trouble.

Aside from the main line, Williams is slightly more hopeful about:

13...♕b6N

With the idea of putting additional pressure on the f2-pawn.

14.♕c2

Avoiding the obvious threat of 14...♘e4.

14...♖ae8

Williams also considers 14...♘g4, offering the response 15.♘a4 ♕d4 16.♕c3 with an advantage for White. That may be true, although it seems to me that a queen exchange should help Black slightly, so instead I would prefer the simple 15.e3± when the knight is doing nothing on g4.



15.♖b1!?

This subtle move looks quite promising, although I should add that there is nothing wrong with 15.e4 and 15.b3, both of which lead to White's advantage according to Williams.

15...♗d6

Obviously this is not forced, but I chose to focus on the text as it seems like the most natural improvement of the black position.

16.e4! d4 17.♘a4 ♕b4

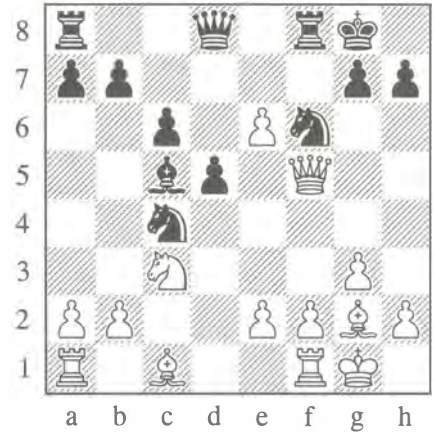
No better is: 17...♕b5 18.b3 ♘b6 (18...♘e5 runs into 19.f4±) 19.♖d1±

18.b3 ♘a3 19.♗xa3 ♕xa3 20.♖bd1 b5

Now White stays on top with a timely return of the extra pawn.

21.e5! ♗xe5 22.♘c5±

Material is equal, but White's positional advantage is obvious.



14.b3!

Williams analyses some alternatives but in the end concludes that this is clearly strongest.

14...♘b6

The tactical justification is seen after 14...♘e4? 15.e7! ♕xe7 16.♘xd5!± White remains with a healthy extra pawn, as pointed out by Simon Williams.

The other possibility is 14...♘d6 15.♕c2 ♖c8, when I found the following nice line: 16.♗f4 ♕e7 17.e4 ♕xe6 18.exd5 cxd5 19.♖ae1 ♘de4 20.♘xd5!± and White will emerge from the complications with an extra pawn.

15.♕c2!

This typical retreat is even more effective than usual thanks to the threat of 16.♘xd5, underlining the vulnerable position of Black's dark-squared bishop.

15...♕e7 16.♗h3±

Williams continues analysing for a few more moves, but it is already clear that Black has failed to obtain compensation for the pawn.

C2) 7...a5 8.b3



Now the two main options are **C21) 8...♘a6** and **C22) 8...♘e4**.

8...♕e8 9.♗b2 reaches line C45.

C21) 8...♘a6 9.♗b2 c6 10.♖e1 d5

This looks slightly surprising, but I consider the transition to a Stonewall set-up Black's best option. 10...♗d7 leads to a clearly better position for White after 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4, for example 13...♗f6 14.♕d2 b5 15.♖c1 ♕e7 16.h4 bxc4 17.bxc4 c5 18.♘e5! and White seized the initiative in Lautier – Roos, France 1987.

11.e3 ♗d7 12.♘e5 ♗e8 13.a3 ♗d6 14.f3 b5 15.♘e2±

As usual in the Stonewall, White retains a small but long-term edge, Lecuyer – Roos, Rouen 1987.

C22) 8...♘e4 9.♗b2

By contrast with the 7...♘e4 line, here I prefer not to swap knights at once, since after 9.♘xe4 fxe4 10.♘d2 d5 11.f3 the inclusion of the moves b2-b3 and ...a7-a5 allows Black the additional resource 11...a4! with double-edged play.



9...♘xc3

The main alternative is:

9...♗f6 10.♕c2 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘c6

A few games saw 11...♕e8, but White is better after 12.e4 ♕h5, Ghaem Maghami – Girinath, Dubai 2007, and now 13.e5!N dxe5 14.dxe5 ♗e7 15.♘d4!± with a clear edge, due to Black's passive queenside pieces.

12.e4

There is no point in postponing this thematic advance.

12...fxe4

The pawn sacrifice 12...f4?! looks far too optimistic. The only game in which this dubious idea occurred continued 13.gxf4 ♕e8 14.e5 ♗e7 15.♕e4! and Black failed to prove any compensation, Sundararajan – Williams, Scarborough 1999.

12...♘b4 does not change the evaluation, as has been proven in the following encounter 13.♕e2 c5 14.♖fd1 fxe4 15.♕xe4 ♕e8 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♖ac1 ♕h5?! 18.d5!± and Black faced serious difficulties, Erdos – Ianov, Zalakaros 2006.

13.♕xe4

White is definitely better. For example:

13...♕e8 14.♖fe1 ♗d7 15.♖ac1 ♘d8 16.♘d2 ♕h5 17.♕e3 ♗g5 18.f4±

Ruck – Williams, Tallinn 1997.

10.♗xc3 ♕e8

Other options:

10...♗f6 11.♕c2 ♘c6 12.e4 transposes to 9...♗f6 above.

10...♘d7 11.♕c2 ♕e8

11...♘f6 can be met comfortably with 12.♘d2 intending 13.e4.

12.a3!?

I like this clever approach. There is no point for White to rush with 12.e4, as it only eases Black's game: 12...f4 13.e5 dxe5 14.dxe5 ♕h5 and Black achieved good results in practice.

12...♕h5 13.b4

White easily develops his play on the queenside, while Black's attacking prospects on the kingside remain in doubt, Sundararajan – Williams, Yerevan 1999.



11.♘e1!?

Far from being White's most popular choice, but somehow I am fond of this manoeuvre. I found the positions after 11.♖e1 ♕h5 12.e4 f4 13.e5 d5 to be rather double-edged.

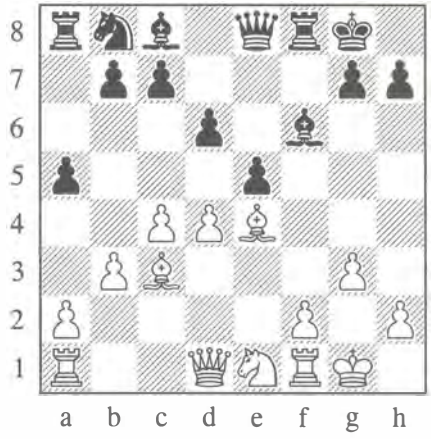
11...♗f6

11...♘d7 may have been a slight improvement, although after 12.♘d3 ♘f6 13.♕c2± White has a pleasant game.

12.e4

This is the correct moment to advance the e-pawn, as the reply ...f4 is not possible.

12...fxe4 13.♗xe4 e5



This position occurred in Broomfield – Phillips, West Bromwich 2003. Here instead of the soft 14.dxe5 I recommend:

14.♘g2!N ♘d7

Or 14...♘c6 15.♖e1! ♔h8 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.f4 with a large advantage for White.

15.♖e1 c6 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.♘f4! ♘c5

17...exf4 runs into the elegant 18.♗xh7†! ♔xh7 19.♖xe8 ♖xe8 20.♕h5† winning.

18.♗c2

White has a clearly favourable position, with easy play against Black's weak central pawn.

C3) 7...♘e4



I always considered this continuation as Black's most interesting possibility, especially taking into account the fact that I failed to achieve anything special for White on the first occasion on which I encountered it over the board. Now, after doing some serious work on this line, I can state with confidence that Black is far from reaching equality.

8.♘xe4

Undoubtedly the critical reply. My above mentioned game, Avrukh – Vouldis, Ermioni Argolidas 2005, saw 8.♕c2 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♘c6 and Black had reasonable prospects.

8...fxe4 9.♘d2

The alternative is 9.♘e1, but I failed to discover any advantage against Black's play in the following game: 9...d5 10.f3 dxc4 11.fxe4 ♖xf1† 12.♗xf1 c5 13.e3 ♘c6 14.♘f3 ♗f6 15.♗xc4 cxd4 16.exd4 ♘xd4 17.♗e3 ♘xf3† 18.♕xf3 Lindberg – Brynell, Stockholm 2007. Now after 18...♗xb2!N 19.♖f1 ♕e8 I do not see how White can pose any serious problems.

9...d5



10.f3!

White wastes no time in breaking down Black's central pawn chain. Now we will consider **C31) 10...exf3** and **C32) 10...♘c6**.

The alternatives are not really playable:

10...e3?! 11.♘b1 dxc4 12.♗xe3 ♗f6 13.♘a3 and Black's position soon collapsed in the following game: 13...c5?! 14.dxc5 ♗xb2 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.♖ad1 ♖f8 17.♘xc4+– Schandorff – Bleis, Copenhagen 2007.

10...c5?! 11.fxe4 ♖xf1† 12.♕xf1 dxe4 (12...dxc4 13.d5±) 13.dxc5 ♕d4† 14.♔h1 ♗d7 15.♘xe4 ♗c6



This was Iljin – Obukhov, Alushta 2008. Now very strong would have been 16.♗g5!N ♗xe4 17.♗xe7 ♗xg2† 18.♔xg2 ♘c6 19.♗d6± and White keeps a material advantage.

C31) 10...exf3 11.♘xf3 ♘c6

The main alternative is

11...c5

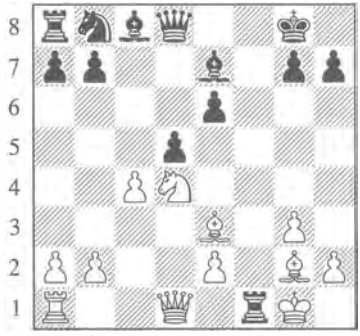
but this looks premature.

12.♗e3!

The opening of the centre favours White, who enjoys a significant lead in development.

12...cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♖xf1†

This position occurred in two games, but on both occasions White missed the strong:



14.♔xf1!N ♘c6

The point is that the natural 14...dxc4 runs into a strong reply: 15.♘xe6! ♕xd1† 16.♖xd1 and White emerges with at least an extra pawn after 16...♘c6 17.♗d5 ♔h8 18.♗xc4.

15.cxd5 exd5 16.♕b3 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4±

White is winning a pawn.

12.b3



12...♗f6

The ultra-active 12...e5?! seems a bit too optimistic. The game Relange – Bricard, Besancon 1999, continued 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♖xf1† 15.♔xf1 ♕f8† and now White should have played 16.♗f3N dxc4 17.♕d5† ♔h8 (17...♕f7 18.bxc4±) 18.♕xc4 ♗h3† 19.♔g1 ♗c5† 20.♔h1 c6 21.♗f4, when his extra pawn is quite significant.

13.♗a3 ♖e8 14.e3

We have reached a fairly stable middlegame, with White maintaining some positional pressure.

14...b6 15.♘e1 ♗b7 16.♘d3 dxc4

White was ready to seize the initiative on the kingside by means of ♕g4 followed by ♘f4, so Black is looking for counterplay.

17.bxc4 ♘a5 18.♗xb7 ♘xb7 19.♘f4 ♘d6

This position occurred in Maletin – Ovechkin, Nizhnij Tagil 2005, and now White could have retained an edge with:



20.♕d3!N ♕d7 21.♘h5! ♗e7 22.♖ac1

Black is under pressure.

C32) 10...♘c6

I believe this is the most challenging.

11.fxe4 ♖xf1†

Clearly inferior is: 11...dxc4? 12.♖xf8† ♗xf8 13.e3 b5 14.a4! ♗a6 15.e5 ♘b4 16.♕g4+– Black collapsed very quickly in Fridman – Taylor, Minneapolis 2005.



12.♘xf1

I found 12.♕xf1 less convincing, since after 12...♘xd4 13.exd5 ♘c2 14.♖b1 ♘e3 15.♕f3 ♘xg2 16.♔xg2 exd5 17.cxd5 c6! 18.dxc6 bxc6 Black has reasonable compensation, thanks to his bishop pair.

12...dxc4 13.♗e3 a6

Black intends ...b5 and ...♗b7. The immediate 13...b5 runs into the unpleasant 14.a4 b4 15.e5! ♗b7 16.♕c2 ♘xd4 17.♕xc4 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2+– and Black loses material, Cox – Williams, Birmingham 2006.

14.e5 ♖b8 15.♖c1!

Simple and strong. In the recent game Avrukh – Meessen, Ohrid 2009, I instead opted for 15.♗e4, but after 15...♘b4N 16.♕b1 h6! Black should be okay.

15...♘b4

This loses a pawn without any compensation, but even after the superior 15...♕d7 16.♖xc4 ♘xe5 17.♖c1 ♘c6 (17...♘g4 18.♗f4 ♗d6 19.e3±) 18.d5! exd5 19.♕xd5† ♔h8 20.♗f4 White is clearly better.

16.a3 ♘d5 17.♖xc4

White has a healthy extra pawn, Jones – Williams, Liverpool 2006.

C4) 7...♕e8

This is Black's most popular choice by some margin. The queen usually makes its way to h5 or g6, although it can sometimes remain on e8 to support the ...e6-e5 advance after ...♗d8. Still, somehow Black's pieces lack coordination and he can hardly hope for equal play.

8.b3



Now Black's main options are **C41) 8...♘c6**, **C42) 8...♘bd7**, **C43) 8...c6**, **C44) 8...♕h5** and **C45) 8...a5**.

C41) 8...♘c6 9.d5! ♘d8

9...exd5 10.cxd5 ♘e5 11.♘d4!

This pawn structure is obviously favourable for White. Here is one illustrative example:

11...♕h5 12.f4 ♘eg4 13.h3 ♘h6 14.♕d3

White has a clear positional edge, although there was no need for Black to aggravate his problems with the following mistake.

14...♘e4? 15.g4!

Black must have overlooked this.

15...fxg4

Trying to complicate matters, but it fails miserably.

16.♗xe4 gxh3 17.♗xh7† ♔h8 18.♔h1 ♗h4 19.♕g6

1–0 Adamski – Christensen, Copenhagen 2000.



10.dxe6!

This simple and strong move secures a favourable pawn structure. White should avoid the seemingly attractive 10.♘b5, which would lead to a decent game for Black after 10...♘xd5! 11.♘xd6 ♗xd6 12.cxd5 e5.

10...♘xe6 11.♘d4 ♘c5 12.♗b2±

White has the typical slight edge for this pawn structure. I only found one game that reached this position, in which Black played 12...a5, which transposes directly to line C451 (page 257). To be honest, there is no particular need for Black to play this pawn move here, but even after a more purposeful move like 12...c6, the above evaluation still stands.

C42) 8...♘bd7 9.♗b2

White should not rush with 9.♘g5 ♗d8 10.d5, since after 10...e5 11.♘e6 ♖f7 Black's position is not bad at all, as he is ready to eliminate the intruder with ...♘f8.

9...e5

Black has also tried 9...♕h5 10.♕c2 ♘g4 intending to bring the second knight to f6, but the idea seems a bit extravagant. 11.h3 ♘h6 12.e4 f4 was seen in Sakaev – Hanley, Dos Hermanas 2003. Now the simple 13.♘e2N would secure White's advantage, for example 13...fxg3 14.fxg3 e5 15.c5!± and the opening of the position is clearly in White's favour.



10.dxe5 dxe5

10...♘xe5 As we already know, this pawn structure almost always promises White better chances. After 11.♘d5 ♗d8, Markland – Parr, Blackpool 1971, I suggest 12.♘f4N±, with a long-term positional edge.

11.e4!

This has not been the most popular choice, but it is a strong one.

11...f4

If 11...fxe4 White does not need to play 12.♘g5, and should instead prefer 12.♘xe4! ♘xe4 13.♕d5† ♔h8 14.♕xe4 when the e5-pawn's days are numbered.

12.gxf4 exf4 13.e5

As often happens, the opening of the position favours White's better coordinated forces.

13...♘g4 14.♘d5 ♗d8N

I do not understand Black's idea behind 14...♘c5? 15.♘xc7 ♕g6:



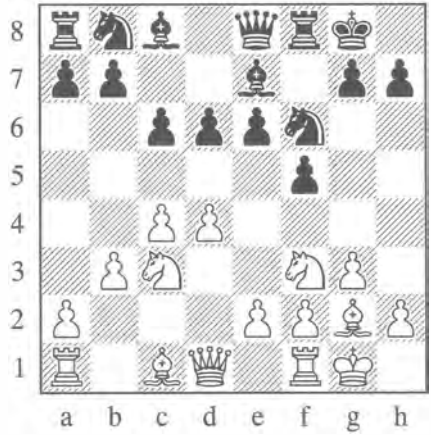
This was Rieke – Krings, Germany 1989, and now White could have simply captured the rook: 16.♘xa8N+–

15.♕d4 c5 16.♕d2

White has a big positional advantage.

C43) 8...c6

This looks rather passive, and White soon obtains a favourable position without difficulty.



9.♕c2 ♘a6

Or 9...♕g6 10.♗a3 ♘bd7 11.e3 The idea of ♘e5 is already in the air. 11...♖e8 12.d5! Very simple and strong. 12...♘g4 13.h3 ♘ge5 14.♘d4± White was clearly better in Pavlovic – Vlahovic, Kladovo 1990.

10.a3

The natural 10.♗a3 would allow 10...e5!, so White prepares to advance the b-pawn. This plan will be all the more effective with Black's knight already committed to a6.

10...♕g6 11.b4 ♘c7 12.a4 ♘e4 13.b5 ♗d7 14.♖b1

White is building a strong initiative on the queenside, Ribli – Rodriguez, Riga 1979.

C44) 8...♕h5 9.♗a3!



This is an important move. The undefended bishop on e7 gives White some extra tactical possibilities.

9...a5

Several other moves have been tried, but we will stick to a few of the more instructive examples.

9...g5?! is too weakening. White can simply continue developing with 10.♕d2 g4 (10...♘g4 does help Black after 11.d5! e5 12.h3 ♘h6 13.♘xe5± and White simply remained with an extra pawn, C. Bognar – Kun, Aggtelek 1997)

11.♘e5! c5 12.♘d3 cxd4 13.♘b5± and Black is in trouble.

9...♖f7

It makes some sense to defend the bishop on e7, but still it seems that White can maintain the advantage by relatively simple means.

10.♕c2 g5

10...♘c6 allows White to force a favourable transformation of the pawn structure by means of 11.d5 exd5 12.♘xd5 (12.cxd5!N was even stronger) 12...♗d8 13.♘f4 ♕h6 14.♖ad1 and White was better in Elliott – Alvarez Villar, e-mail 1997.

11.♖ad1

The immediate 11.e4 runs into 11...fxe4N (11...f4?! 12.e5 leads to a clearly favourable position for White, Liebert – Poenisch, Germany 2001) 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 g4 14.♘h4 d5! This is actually one of the hidden ideas behind 9...♖f7. 15.cxd5 ♗xa3 16.dxe6 ♖f6 17.d5 ♘a6∞ and despite what appears to be quite nice compensation I do not see anything decisive for White, while Black intends to improve his position by developing his queenside pieces.

11...♘bd7 12.♗c1

Removing the bishop from the a3-square. We saw in the previous note how this piece might turn out to be tactically vulnerable.

12...h6 13.e4

There is no reason to delay this thematic advance any longer.

13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♕xe4 ♘f6 16.♕d3

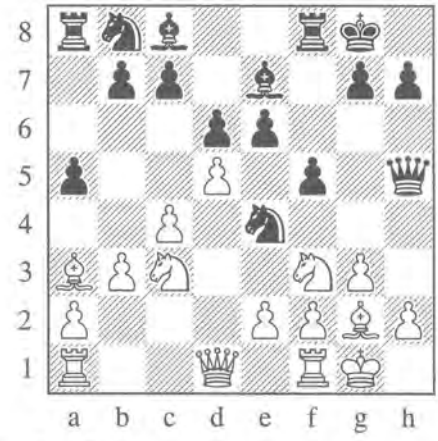
White has a pleasant advantage.

10.d5!

One of the key ideas behind the development of the bishop on a3. White exploits the fact that Black cannot play 10...e5? in view of the simple 11.♘xe5, in order to force a favourable change in the pawn structure.

10...♘e4

Black has also tried 10...♘a6 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.♘d4 ♗c8 13.e3 ♕g6, Portisch – Rossolimo, Monte Carlo 1969, and here White could have secured his positional edge with: 14.♘db5!N±



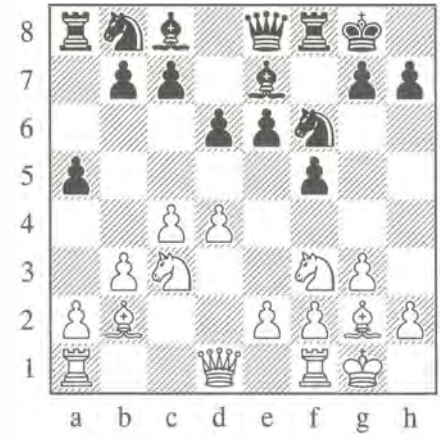
11.♖c1 ♘a6

If 11...♘xc3 12.♖xc3 ♗f6 13.♖c1 it is true that Black can play 13...e5, but White has the powerful retort 14.c5! dxc5 15.♖xc5 with a strong queenside initiative.

12.dxe6 ♗xe6 13.♘d4 ♘xc3 14.♖xc3 ♗c8 15.♘b5!

White has an obvious positional advantage, Yevseev – Gavritenkov, Tula 1998.

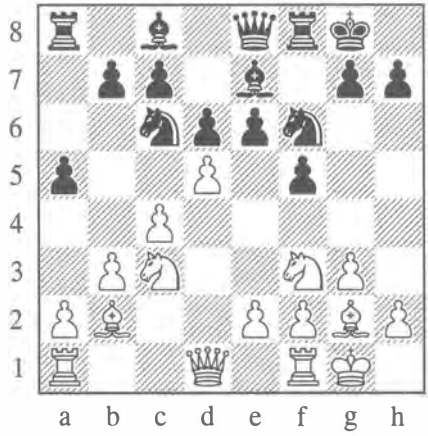
C45) 8...a5 9.♗b2



The development of the bishop on a3 makes less sense when the e7-bishop is securely defended. Now we arrive at a further division, with four main choices for Black: **C451) 9...♘c6**, **C452) 9...♕h5**, **C453) 9...c6** and **C454) 9...♘a6**.

C451) 9...♘c6 10.d5

This is a programmed response to the development of the knight on c6, and it works well here too.



10...♘d8

We should also check some other knight moves.

10...♘e5? is refuted easily by means of 11.♘xe5 dxe5 12.♘b5!± and Black is in trouble, Bertholee – Van de Mortel, Dieren 1991.

10...♘b4 leads to a very pleasant position for White after 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.♘d4 ♗c8 13.e3 c6 14.a3 ♘a6, Cruz – De las Heras, Buenos Aires 1964, and now the natural 15.♘a4 ♗d8 16.♕c2 would have left White with a stable advantage.

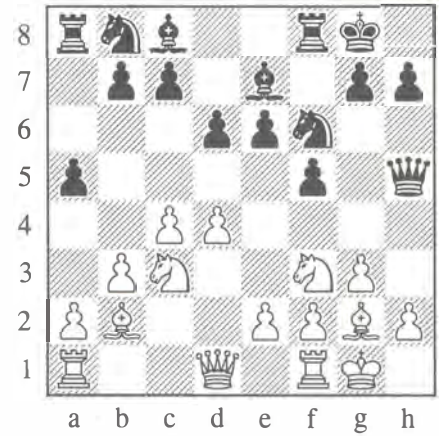
11.dxe6 ♘xe6

I have already mentioned several times that this pawn structure is generally favourable for White. The following arrangement is quite standard for this kind of position.

12.♘d4 ♘c5 13.♕c2 ♕h5 14.e3 c6 15.a3±

White intends to generate active play on the queenside by advancing his b-pawn. He has a pleasant and stable advantage, Yakovich – Shtyrenkov, Balakovo 1994.

C452) 9...♕h5



10.♘e1!?

Not the most popular option, but to me it looks quite attractive. The knight is heading for d3, where it will be perfectly placed for controlling several important central squares. At the same time White opens the diagonal for his light-squared bishop and prepares the thematic e2-e4 advance.

Less clear to me is 10.e3 ♘a6 11.♘e1 ♕h6!.

10...c6

Other possibilities:

10...♘bd7 11.♘d3 c6?! This was seen in Seidemann – Just, Fuerstenwalde 1981. Black's last move was too passive, and the temporary weakness of the e6-square allows the nice tactical trick: 12.d5 cxd5 13.♘f4! ♕f7 14.cxd5±

10...♘c6

This was played in Efimov – Naumkin, Asti 1996. Now I see no reason for White to refrain from the standard reaction:



11.d5!N ♘e5

Another line runs 11...exd5 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘b4 14.♕d2±. The arising pawn structure promises White a lasting advantage, thanks to the permanent weakness of the c7-pawn.

12.♘b5!

After 12.dxe6 c6 Black regains the pawn, although White is still slightly better after: 13.♘d3 ♗xe6 14.♘f4±

12...♘e8 13.dxe6 c6 14.♘d4 ♕h6

White is clearly better after: 14...♘c7 15.e4! ♕xd1 16.♖xd1 fxe4 17.♗xe4 ♗xe6 (17...♘xe6 18.♘f5±) 18.♘xe6 ♘xe6 19.♗xe5 dxe5 20.♖d7±

15.♘ec2 ♗xe6 16.♘xe6 ♕xe6 17.♘d4 ♕g6 18.♕c2

White's bishop pair secures him a long-term edge.

11.♘d3 d5

It is hard to advise anything else with e4 on the way.

12.f3 ♘a6

This position occurred in Estremera Panos – Pomes Marcet, Oropesa del Mar 1996. Here I developed the following idea for White:

13.♕d2!?N ♘b4

Otherwise White carries out the e2-e4 advance, for instance after: 13...♖b8?! 14.e4±

14.♘f4

Now after 14.e4 ♘xd3 15.♕xd3 fxe4 16.fxe4 dxc4 17.♕xc4 ♗d7 Black is pretty much in the game.

14...♕h6 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♘a4 ♗d8 17.♗c3 b6

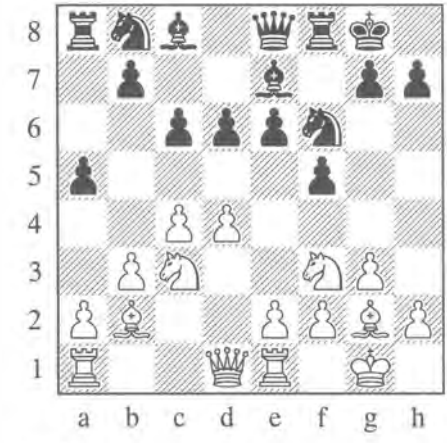
White has no reason to fear 17...b5 18.cxb5 cxb5 19.♘b2 ♘b8 20.♘bd3 and Black has only created weaknesses on the queenside.

18.♕b2 ♗c7 19.♘d3±

A thematic Stonewall pawn structure, where White's pieces are better coordinated.

C453) 9...c6 10.♖e1

White prepares the thematic e2-e4.



10...d5

Switching to the Stonewall pawn structure once again seems to be Black's most reasonable option.

Alternatively 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.♘d2 d5 13.f3 exf3 14.exf3± leads to a clearly favourable position for White, Hoang Thanh Trang – Kun, Budapest 2005.

10...♘a6 allows White to execute his main idea. 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4 Here I like the following example: 13...♕h5 14.♖e3 ♕f5 15.♕d2 ♗f6 16.♗c3 ♘c7 17.a4! Not allowing any counterplay connected with ...a5-a4. 17...♗d7 18.♘e1 b6 19.♘d3 ♖ae8 20.♖ae1 ♕h5 21.f4± and White is firmly in control, Babula – Bunzmann, Austria 2007.

11.e3

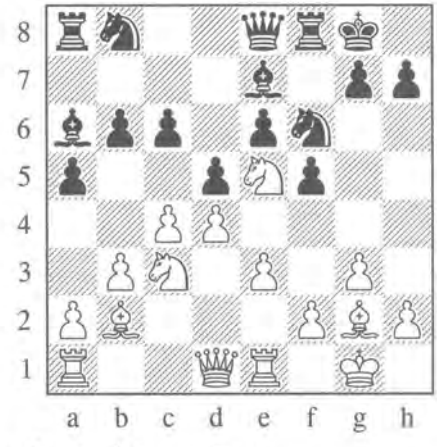
My opinion is that the Stonewall structure almost always promises White slightly better prospects, and this position is no exception.

11...b6

11...b5 might appear more active, but it only weakens Black's position on the queenside, as demonstrated in the following encounter: 12.♘e5 ♘e4 13.♘e2 ♗f6 14.f3 ♘d6 15.cxb5 cxb5 16.♖c1 b4 17.♘f4 with an obvious positional superiority, Chuchelov – Spice, Eupen 1997.

12.♘e5 ♗a6

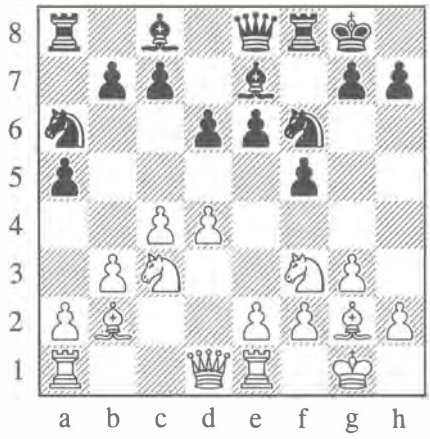
This was seen in Straub – Zatonskih, Kiev 1998. Now White could have retained the initiative as follows:



13.♘a4N ♘fd7 14.♖c1±

With definite pressure.

C454) 9...♘a6 10.♖e1



White prepares the standard e2-e4 pawn break.

10...♕g6

The most natural move. Other options:

10...♘e4 11.♘d2! White fights for control over the e4-square. 11...♘xd2 (also after 11...♘xc3 12.♗xc3 White stands better, with e4 to follow) 12.♕xd2 c6 13.e4 ♕h5 14.exf5 ♕xf5 15.♘a4 ♗d8 16.♖e3!± White obtained a clear positional advantage in Sulyok – Bachofner, Hartberg 2004.

10...♕h5 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♖xe4

If White manages to carry out the e2-e4 advance he will almost always stand better. We will look at a few examples.

13...♗f6 14.♕e2 ♗d7

14...c5?! is too weakening, and White found a nice tactical trick in the following encounter: 15.♖d1 ♗d7 16.♘e5! ♕xe2 17.♖xe2 ♗c8 18.♘f3 With easy play against the weak pawns on e6 and d6. 18...a4 19.dxc5 dxc5 20.♘e5± White's advantage is undisputable, Damljanovic – Gundersen, Eupen 1999.

The present position was reached in Kholmov – Chistiakov, Tbilisi 1949. Now I like the following line:



15.♘d2!?N

The following continuation looks quite logical:

15...♕xe2 16.♖xe2 ♖ab8 17.♘e4 ♗e7 18.♗c3 b6 19.f4

White has persistent positional pressure.



11.e4!

It turns out that Black is not really preventing the e2-e4 advance.

11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♖xe4

The rook is untouchable, as after 13...♕e4? 14.♘h4 the queen is trapped.

13...♘b4

Another option is:

13...e5 14.♘h4!

This is the easiest way to prove White's advantage.

14...♗xh4

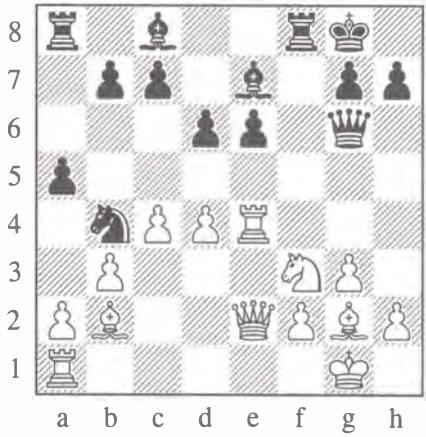
14...♕f7 does not change the evaluation after 15.♕e2!. In Yrjola – Pyhala, Espoo 1985. Black now faltered with 15...g5? 16.dxe5 gxh4 17.e6 and thanks to the threat of 18.♖g4† Black was already busted.

15.♖xh4 exd4 16.♕xd4

White already has a large advantage, and in the following game Black quickly collapsed under the pressure:

16...♘c5 17.♖e1 ♘d3? 18.♕d5† ♔h8 19.♗e4 1–0 Lomineishvili – Rychagov, Moscow 1997.

14.♕e2



14...♗f6

The alternatives are no better:

14...e5? This idea simply leads to disaster. 15.dxe5 ♗f5 16.exd6 ♗xe4 17.dxe7 ♖fe8 18.♘e5 ♗d3 19.♕d2 ♕d6 20.a3 and White wins, Chuchelov – Spice, Clichy 1995.

14...♕h5 15.a3 ♘a6 16.♘d2 ♕xe2 17.♖xe2 c6 18.♖ae1 and White is clearly better, thanks to the weakness of the e6-pawn, Rieke – Moser, Oberwart 2000.

15.a3 ♘a6

Somewhat stronger is 15...♘c6, although White keeps serious pressure after 16.♖e1.

16.♗h3!

Now it is hard for Black to defend the e6-pawn, for instance:

16...♘c5 17.♖e3 ♕h5 18.♔g2! e5 19.♗xc8 exd4

This position occurred in Contin – Caruso, Monselice 2003.



20.♗xb7!N

The game continued 20.g4 ♕f7 21.♗e6 ♘xe6 22.♖xe6, and now Black for some reason did not play 22...d3N, when the position would have become less clear than we would like.

The text leaves us in no doubt about the final evaluation.

20...dxe3 21.♗xa8 ♖xa8 22.♗xf6 gxf6 23.♕xe3

White has an extra pawn and a winning position.

Conclusion:

The Classical Dutch does not, and perhaps never will, enjoy the best reputation. Nevertheless it should under no circumstances be underestimated, as the black position contains a surprising amount of dynamic potential. In most variations my recommendations are not difficult to understand; White will look to develop his pieces in a purposeful way, usually with a view to opening the centre with e2-e4. This should enable him to enter the middlegame with optimism, although in most cases the main battle will lie ahead.



Dutch Defence



Leningrad Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.0–0 0–0

6.b3

A) 6...c5 263
B) 6...d6 7.♗b2 265
B1) 7...a5 265
B2) 7...e6 266
B3) 7...c6 267
B4) 7...♘e4 8.♘bd2 ♘xd2 9.♕xd2 270
B41) 9...♘d7 271
B42) 9...♘c6 272
B5) 7...e5?! 273
B6) 7...h6 275
B7) 7...♘c6 276
B8) 7...♕e8 8.c4 278
B81) 8...e5 9.dxe5 278
B811) 9...♘g4 278
B812) 9...♘fd7 279
B82) 8...♘c6 280
B83) 8...♘e4 281
B84) 8...♘a6 9.♕c2!? 282
B841) 9...h6 284
B842) 9...♘b4 285
B843) 9...♖b8 286

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.0–0 0–0

The alternative move order 5...d6 6.b3 does not change much, since after 6...0–0 7.♗b2 the play just transposes to our main line B. The only other possibility worth mentioning is 6...c5, although in general I am not a great believer in mixing the moves ...f5 and ...c5 early in the opening. 7.♗b2 (But not 7.dxc5 ♘e4 8.c3 ♘xc5 with reasonable play for Black.) 7...♘e4 8.c4 ♘c6 9.e3 0–0 10.♘c3 This position will be examined after 6...c5 in line A below.

6.b3

The most popular theoretical continuation is 6.c4 intending 7.♘c3, but after careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that the text offers at least as many chances for White to fight for the advantage.

Leningrad players will tend to advance the d-pawn one square without a second thought, although of course there are many other moves that can be tried. We will consider the semi-serious alternative **A) 6...c5**, before moving on to the standard **B) 6...d6**.

Here is a brief round-up of the alternatives.

6...♘e4 7.♗b2 c5 8.c4 ♘c6 9.e3 reaches a position that will be examined in line A below.

6...d5 7.c4 c6 reaches a Stonewall structure in which it is hard to believe g7 can be the right square for Black's dark-squared bishop. Here I like the following plan involving the active development of the bishop on a3: 8.♗a3 ♔h8 9.e3 ♗e6 10.♕d3 ♘e4 11.♖c1 ♘d7 12.♘c3± with a pleasant game for White, Van Wely – Garcia Ilundain, Linares 1995. Black must be on guard against a well-timed capture on d5, intending to meet ...cxd5 with ♕b5.

6...c6 7.♗b2

Now one of the Stonewall versions is 7...d5

Perhaps Black can claim to have improved slightly over the previous line, since the bishop has committed itself to b2. However, White's position is still a little more comfortable.

Of course 7...d6 would transpose to Line B3.

8.♘bd2 ♔h8 9.♘e5

This plan seems quite natural to me; White is not obliged to rush with c2-c4.

9...♗e6 10.e3

10.c4!? is also quite playable.

10...♘bd7 11.♘d3 a5 12.a4 ♗g8 13.c4 ♘e4 14.♖c1 ♕b6 15.♘f3 ♕a6 16.♕c2 ♖ac8 17.♖fd1±

White has a pleasant game with a small but stable edge, Neverov – Rendle, Hastings 2008.

A) 6...c5



7.e3

One of Black's key ideas is that after 7.♗b2 cxd4 8.♘xd4 d5! he gets a very decent game. Apart from the main move, White can also use the move order 7.c4 ♘e4 8.♗b2 ♘c6 9.e3 to reach the same position as in the main line with 7.e3.

7...♘c6 8.♗b2 ♘e4 9.c4 d6

Black has an important alternative in:

9...e6 10.♕e2!

A logical move. By defending the bishop on b2 White gives himself the options of d4-d5 and dxc5.

10...♕f6

This attempt to maintain the pressure was not really successful in the following game:

11.♘c3 g5 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♘e5 d5 14.f3! ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♕g6

In Kushnir – Levitina, Dortmund 1977. White missed a strong continuation:



16.cxd5!N exd5 17.fxe4 dxe4 18.♖xf8† ♗xf8 19.♖f1 ♗e6 20.♖f6 ♕e8 21.♗xe4±

White has an extra pawn and a much better position.

10.♘c3 e6

10...♕a5 was played in Romanishin – Nikac, Bar 2008, and now the simple 11.♕d3!N would have secured a promising position, for instance: 11...♘f6 (11...♘b4 achieves nothing after 12.♕b1) 12.d5 ♘b4 13.♕e2± with a pleasant advantage for White.

A more popular and important alternative is:

10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♔h8

The tempting 11...e5 is well met by 12.dxc5! (More accurate than 12.dxe5, as in this case Black is not obliged to recapture the pawn immediately, but can instead try 12...♗e6 or 12...♖e8.) 12...dxc5?! (Somewhat stronger for Black would be 12...e4N, but also here after 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘d4 [also interesting might be 14.cxd6!? exf3 15.♗xf3 ♗e6 16.c5⩲ with strong compensation] 14...dxc5 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.f3 exf3 17.♕xf3 and White will continue with e3-e4 and enjoy a pleasant advantage, thanks to Black's dubious pawn structure.) 13.♕d5†! ♕xd5 14.cxd5 ♘b4 15.♗xe5 ♘xd5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♖ac1± Gelzenleichter – Gudat, Wingst 1999. Black loses his c5-pawn, since 17...b6? runs into 18.♘g5! winning.

12.♖c1 ♕c7

12...e5?! does not achieve the desired result after 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘g5! ♖f8 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.♖fd1 and White is clearly better.

We are following the game Zilberman – Kosashvili, Kfar Sava 1993. Here White should have played the natural:



13.d5N

For example:

13...♗xc3 14.♖xc3 ♘e5

Now White has a strong retort:

15.e4! f4

15...♘xf3† 16.♖xf3! makes good use of the rook's position on the third rank.

16.♕d2 fxg3 17.hxg3

White's better structure ensures a slight but long-term edge. He can also consider the more aggressive 17.fxg3!? when Black will have to play carefully to defend his kingside.

11.♖c1 ♕e7

This was Schuh – Kummer, Oberwart 1993. Here White could have obtained a serious advantage with the following forcing line:



12.♘xe4!N fxe4 13.♘d2 cxd4 14.♘xe4 dxe3 15.♗xg7 exf2† 16.♖xf2 ♖xf2 17.♔xf2 ♕xg7 18.♕xd6 ♕b2† 19.♕d2 ♕xd2† 20.♘xd2±

Black will have a tough time defending this ending.

B) 6...d6 7.♗b2



Black has tried a great variety of different moves here. We will consider the following in detail: **B1) 7...a5**, **B2) 7...e6**, **B3) 7...c6**, **B4) 7...♘e4**, **B5) 7...e5?!**, **B6) 7...h6**, **B7) 7...♘c6** and **B8) 7...♕e8**.

7...♘a6 8.c4 has little independent significance. For Black to make any sense of the position of his knight he will have to play ...c6 in the near future, transposing to line B3.

7...♘g4

This strange-looking move, which prepares a quick ...e5, has been tried by several strong players including Vladimir Malaniuk, a Leningrad specialist. White should react with

8.h3 ♘h6 9.♘c3

Seldom played, but it seems to work well.

9...f4

Or 9...♘f7 10.e4.

10.g4 c6 11.♕d2 ♘d7

This was Ftacnik – Gurevich, Jakarta 1996. Now before carrying out the intended e2-e3, White should have first prepared this with:

12.♖ad1!N

I analysed the following line, which illustrates White's chances rather well.

12...♕a5 13.e3 fxe3 14.♕xe3 e5 15.♘a4! ♘f7 16.dxe5 ♘dxe5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♗xe5 ♕xe5 19.♕xe5 dxe5 20.♘c5!

With an obvious positional edge.

B1) 7...a5 8.c4

A bit more flexible than 8.♘bd2 a4 9.c4.



8...♘a6

There is not much point for Black to advance the a-pawn: 8...a4 9.b4! ♕e8 10.♘a3! (this is an extra option White gets by refraining from 8.♘bd2) 10...c6 11.♖b1 h6 Delchev – Biliskov, Zadar 2001. Now I like 12.b5!N when White is obviously better, as Black failed to obtain any decent counterplay.

9.♘bd2 c6 10.♕c2!

Just in time. If 10.a3 Black can already get a decent game by means of 10...e5! 11.dxe5 ♘g4.

10...♕e8

10...♘b4 does not really bother White, as he will soon regain the lost tempo by chasing the knight away. 11.♕b1 ♖b8 12.a3 ♘a6 13.♕c2 b5 14.♘e1!? A remarkable positional idea that we will see in other lines as well. The knight is heading for d3, increasing the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal. 14...♗d7 15.♘d3 ♘c7 16.e3 ♘e6 17.♖ac1± White has obtained a pleasant game, I. Ivanov – Lutikov, Yerevan 1977.

10...♗d7 11.a3 b5 12.♘e1 ♖b8 13.♘d3 transposes to the position reached after 10...♘b4 above.

11.a3

Other moves are possible, but I like the text the most.

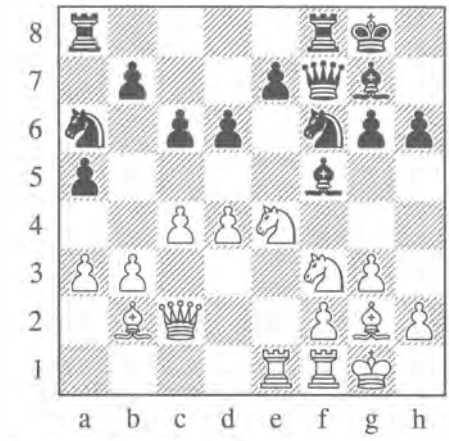
11...h6

Quite interesting is 11...♘h5 12.e4 f4 13.d5 e5 14.dxe6 ♗xb2 15.♕xb2 ♗xe6 16.e5! and White seized the initiative in Odendahl – Dormann, Germany 1992.

12.♖ae1

Now everything is ready for the e2-e4 advance. In the following game Black failed to find an adequate response.

12...♕f7?! 13.e4 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♗f5



15.♘h4! ♗xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘xe4 17.♕xe4±

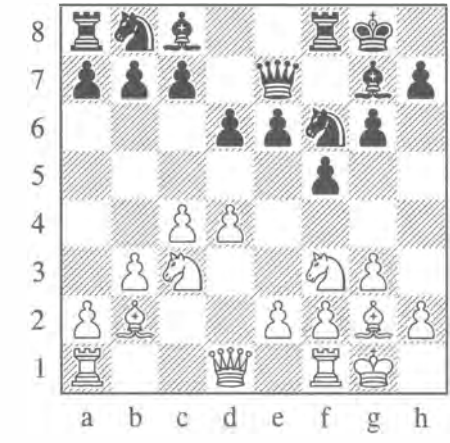
White achieved a big advantage in Tratar – Rogetzer, Vienna 2003.

B2) 7...e6

This arrangement has recently been played very often by the top Slovenian female player Muzychuk. Still, I find it hard to believe that Black can fight for equality in this way.

8.c4 ♕e7 9.♘c3

In this position the knight belongs on c3, as it is useful to have the option of jumping to d5 after ...e6-e5.



9...♘c6

Muzychuk has tried a couple of alternative set-ups, without much success.

9...♘bd7 is well met by 10.♖e1, planning a quick e2-e4. 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.♘d2 d5 13.f3! exf3 (13...♗h6 does not change much: 14.♘f1 ♘f6 15.♕c2 forces Black to capture on f3 anyway.) 14.exf3 c6 15.f4 ♘f6 16.a4 ♕c7 17.♘f3 ♘e4 18.♘e5± and White's positional advantage is obvious, Tratar – Muzychuk, Bled 2008.

9...c6 10.♗a3 c5 Now I like White's play in the following game: 11.b4! ♘e4 12.♖c1 cxb4 13.♗xb4 ♘c6 14.♗a3 ♘xc3 15.♖xc3 ♖d8 16.♖e3!? ♗h6 17.♖d3 and White exerts long-lasting pressure thanks to his better pawn structure, Sasikiran – Muzychuk, Antwerp 2009.

10.♕c2

10.d5 should also be good enough for an edge, but I like the text even more.

10...e5

10...♘d8 looks too passive. After the simple 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♘f7 14.♖fe1 ♕f6 15.♖e2± White was much better in Butnorius – Ashby, Gibraltar 2007.

11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♘d5 ♕d6



This position was reached in Johannsson – Menvielle Lacourrelle, Havana 1966. Now I discovered the following remarkable line:

13.♖ac1!N

The game continuation of 13.♖fd1 allowed Black to obtain a satisfactory position by exchanging on d5. After the text move the pressure against c7 prevents this idea.

13...e4 14.♖fd1! ♕c5 15.♘g5 h6 16.♘h3 g5 17.♕d2

This is stronger than 17.♘xc7 ♘b4 18.♕d2 ♕xc7 19.♕xb4 f4, with some compensation for Black due to the misplaced knight on h3.

17...♕d6

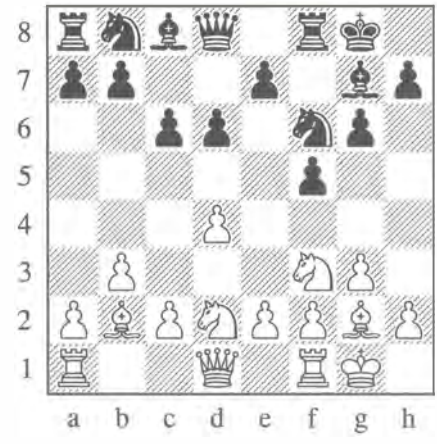
Defending c7. 17...♖f7 is also not an ideal solution in view of 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♕d5† ♕xd5 21.cxd5 when the c7-pawn drops anyway.

After the text move Black seems to be holding his position together, but an unpleasant surprise awaits him.

18.♘xg5! hxg5 19.♕xg5 ♘e8 20.♘f6† ♖xf6 21.♖xd6 ♖xd6 22.c5 ♖d7 23.f3!

White has a serious advantage. Material is approximately equal, but Black's exposed king and poor coordination will almost certainly force him to make some further concessions.

B3) 7...c6 8.♘bd2



8...♘a6

This is Black's usual choice. There is also:

8...♕e8 9.c4 h6

9...e5? 10.dxe5 ♘g4 does not work in view of the thematic 11.♗a3!± V. Ianov – Stepanets, Policka 1996.

10.♕c2 g5 11.e4

Another possible plan is 11.e3 followed by play on the queenside, but I prefer the text.

11...fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4

After 12...♕g6 13.♘xf6† ♕xf6 14.♖ae1 ♘a6 15.♖e3, we reach the note to Black's 10th move in line B841 (7...♕e8 8.c4 ♘a6 9.♕c2 h6 10.♘bd2 g5 11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♕g6 13.♘xf6† ♕xf6 14.♖ae1 c6 15.♖e3).

13.♕xe4 ♗f5 14.♕e3

In general, after carrying out the e2-e4 advance and opening the e-file White's position seems to me to be preferable from a positional point of view, due to the permanent weakness of Black's e-pawn. Here is an illustrative example:

14...♘d7 15.♖fe1 ♕g6 16.h3 ♖ae8

Garifulin – Pasko, Evpatoria 2006. Now White missed a strong opportunity:



17.g4!N ♗c2 18.♖ac1

Black starts to experience definite problems, due to the awkward position of his light-squared bishop.

18...e5 19.♕d2 ♗e4

Now White carries out a favourable simplification.

20.♘h4! gxh4 21.♗xe4 ♕g5

The continuation 21...♕f7 22.♗f5 exd4 23.♖xe8 ♖xe8 24.♗xd4± does not bring Black any relief either.

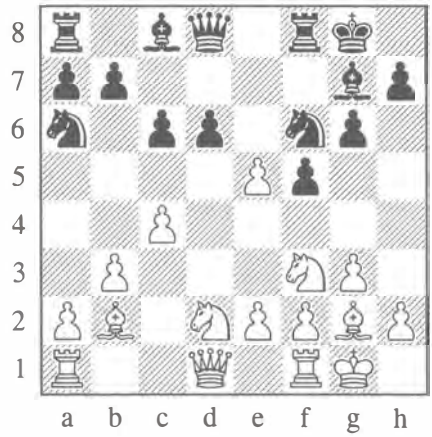
22.♕xg5 hxg5 23.♗a3! ♖f6 24.♗f5 ♖d8 25.dxe5 ♘xe5 26.♖e3±

The endgame is clearly in White's favour, due to his strong bishop pair.

9.c4 e5

The most popular alternative 9...♕e8 10.♕c2 will be examined in the note to Black's 9th move in variation B84, via the move order 7...♕e8 8.c4 ♘a6 9.♕c2 c6 (see page 283).

10.dxe5



10...♘d7

As always, the other option is:

10...♘g4 11.♕c2

It looks interesting, though perhaps a bit too speculative, to try: 11.♗a3 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xe5 13.♘f3 ♗xa1 14.♕xa1⩲

11...♘xe5

Black cannot play 11...dxe5? in view of 12.h3±.

12.♖ad1

Black has a playable position, but as I mentioned already he can seldom hope for full equality in this kind of structure. White

almost always keeps some pressure and can gradually look to expand on the queenside.

12...♕e7 13.a3

Not only preventing a possible knight jump, but also preparing a future advance of the b-pawn.

13...♗d7

Another option is 13...♗e6 14.♘d4 ♗d7 (if 14...♗f7 White can bravely continue with 15.e4!, since Black has blocked his kingside rook and thus deprived himself of the option of ...f5-f4. 15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 d5 17.cxd5 ♗xd5 18.♖fe1 ♖ae8 19.f4 ♘d7 Khurtsidze – Vrana, Bad Woerishofen 2005. Now the accurate 20.b4!N would have brought White a clear plus, thanks to her much better mobilized pieces and the problematic placement of Black's queen.) 15.e3!N (This seems to me more accurate than 15.♖fe1 as occurred in Damljanovic – Anic, Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1995, when Black could have obtained reasonable counterplay by means of 15...f4!.) After the text White retains better chances in a complex middlegame, for example 15...♘c5 16.b4 ♘e6 17.♘4b3!± heading for a5.

14.b4 ♘c7 15.♘b3 ♗e6 16.♘a5 ♖ab8 17.♘d4 ♗f7

This position was reached in Milos – Ochoa de Echaguen, Las Palmas 1993. Now I like the following idea:



18.♖d2!?N

With the natural plan of increasing the pressure by doubling rooks along the d-file. At the same time White also sets a nice trap:

18...d5 19.cxd5 ♗xd5 20.♗xd5† ♘xd5

Somewhat stronger is 20...cxd5 although after 21.♖c1 White maintains a clear positional advantage.

21.♘dxc6! bxc6 22.♗xe5 ♕xe5 23.♘xc6 ♕c3 24.♘xb8 ♕xc2 25.♖xc2 ♖xb8 26.♖d1±

White is much better.

11.♘d4!

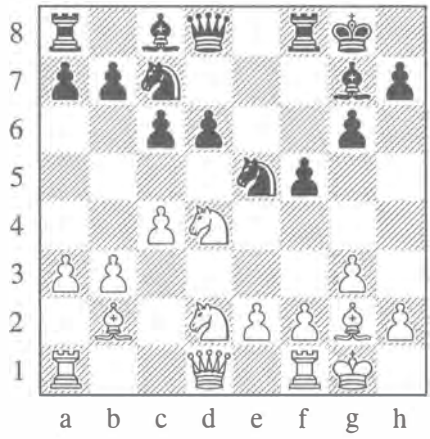
This is the way to force Black to recapture on e5 with the knight rather than the pawn – an idea that is well worth remembering!

11...♘xe5 12.a3

White prepares the advance of the b-pawn.

12...♘c7

We have been following the game Lazarev – Ficco, Castellaneta 2000. Now I like the following plan:



13.b4!N

This is the consistent follow-up to the previous move.

13...♕e7 14.♕b3!

This move carries a subtle positional threat.

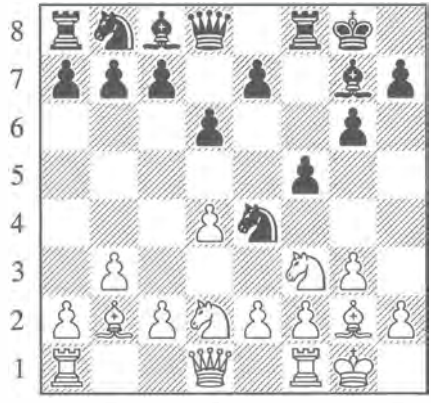
14...♔h8

Not the best response, but it looks very natural and allows us to see the real point of White's previous move.

15.f4! ♘g4 16.e4

The queen covers the e3-square, and White is obviously better.

B4) 7...♘e4 8.♘bd2



8...♘xd2

Black has several other options.

8...d5 The Stonewall set-up is always an option, although as I mentioned previously, it is unlikely to bring him equal chances in most cases. White should continue 9.c4 c6 10.♖c1 with the more pleasant game, for instance 10...♗h6 11.e3 ♗e6, Bareev – Palatnik, Voronezh 1987, and now I like the following idea: 12.♕c2!?N ♘a6 13.a3 ♖c8 14.♘e5 ♗g7 15.♘d3 White has seriously improved his position, while Black failed to get any real counterplay.

8...c5 9.♕c1!

By defending his dark-squared bishop White immediately solves the problem of any tension along the a1-h8 diagonal.

9...♘xd2

If 9...cxd4 it looks good to try 10.♘xe4!? fxe4 11.♘xd4 d5 12.c4 and Black's centre is quite vulnerable.

10.♕xd2 ♘c6

A couple of games have reached this position. I like the following new idea:

11.♖ad1!?N±

Restraining the possible ...e7-e5 break, and planning c2-c4 with a pleasant edge.

8...♘c6 9.♘e1!

The best chance to fight for an opening advantage.

9...d5

Once again we encounter another slightly different incarnation of the Stonewall structure.

Instead after 9...♘xd2 10.♕xd2 the play transposes to 8...♘xd2.

10.♘df3 f4

This is the only move to have been tested, but perhaps Black is trying to become too active.

11.♘d3 g5

Another option is 11...fxg3 12.hxg3 ♗f5 13.♖c1 ♗h6 14.♖b1 (certainly White has no intention allowing 14.e3 ♗g4) 14...♗e6?! (This allows White to seize the initiative. More accurate was 14...♗g7 although after 15.c4 e6 16.♖c1± White's position looks preferable to me.) 15.♘c5! ♘xc5 16.dxc5 ♗f5 17.b4 ♗g7 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.b5 with a clear advantage, Cramling – Ziska, Calvia 2006.

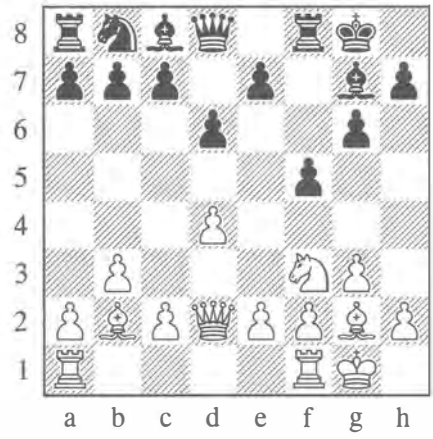
12.c4 e6 13.♖c1

As often happens, the advance of the f-pawn did not bring Black any dividends and only weakened his position on the kingside. White proved his advantage in the following game:

13...♘e7 14.♘d2 ♘d6 15.e3 fxe3 16.fxe3 ♘df5 17.♕e2±

Lputian – Gurevich, Jurmala 1983.

9.♕xd2



Black occasionally tries **B41) 9...♘d7**, but the most popular move by far is **B42) 9...♘c6**.

B41) 9...♘d7

The idea of transferring the queen's knight to f6 is far from senseless, but it gives White a bit of extra time to carry out his plans.

10.c4 ♘f6

Two other options are relevant, but insufficient:

10...e5?

This move occurred just once, in Claus – Haase, Kassel 2000. Now White can achieve a big advantage with some energetic play.

11.♘g5!N

I analysed the following attractive line that illustrates the dangers Black is facing:

11...♘b6 12.dxe5 ♗xe5

Or 12...dxe5 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♖ad1 ♗f6 15.f4!±.

13.♗d5†!

The key move. Unexpectedly Black is unable to avoid material losses. The point is revealed after:

13...♔g7



14.♗xb7!

And White wins.

10...c6

White can try a few different plans here, but I found the following idea to be the most interesting.

11.♘g5!? ♘f6 12.d5 ♗d7

I also examined 12...c5 13.♖ae1 preparing the advance of the e-pawn. 13...h6 14.♘e6 ♗xe6 15.dxe6 ♘e4 16.♗xe4 fxe4 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕d5 ♕c8 19.♕xe4 ♖f6 20.f4 ♖b8 21.♕d3 ♕xe6 22.e4 and despite heavy simplifications White keeps the initiative, for instance 22...♖ff8 23.e5 ♖bd8 24.exd6 ♕xd6 25.♕e2 with an obvious advantage, due to the weakness of the e-pawn.



This position occurred in Stefansson – Fernandes, Istanbul 2000. Now I found the following improvement:

13.♖ad1!?N h6

Black cannot really sit and wait, as White can seriously consider opening the centre. For instance, after 13...♖c8 there is 14.dxc6!? bxc6 15.c5! d5 16.♗e5 with a favourable position.

14.♘h3 g5

Preventing ♘f4.

14...cxd5? is no good in view of 15.♗xf6 followed by ♕xd5† and ♕xb7.

15.dxc6!

This is a concrete and strong approach.

15...♗xc6

15...bxc6 leads to a more or less forced line: 16.c5! ♘e4 (after 16...d5? 17.♗xf6! ♗xf6 18.♗xd5† White wins material) 17.♗xe4 fxe4 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♘xg5! hxg5 20.♕xg5† ♔h7 (Worse is 20...♔f7 21.f3! e3 22.♖d4 ♗e6 23.♕h6+– and Black appears to be helpless.) 21.cxd6 ♖f7 22.♕h5† ♔g8 23.♕g6† ♖g7 24.♕xe4± Black managed to survive in the complications, but White emerged with a material advantage with four pawns against a bishop.

16.f4 g4 17.♘f2

White is much better, as he has a clear plan of carrying out the e2-e4 advance, for instance:

17...h5 18.♗xf6! ♗xf6 19.♗d5†±

Followed by e2-e4.

11.d5

White intends to continue with 12.♘d4, so Black has to react somehow.

11...♘e4 12.♕c2 e5 13.dxe6

Once again reaching the typically favourable pawn structure.

13...♗xb2 14.♕xb2 ♗xe6 15.♘d2!

The knight swap allows White to increase the pressure against Black's queenside.

15...♘xd2 16.♕xd2 ♕c8 17.♖fe1!

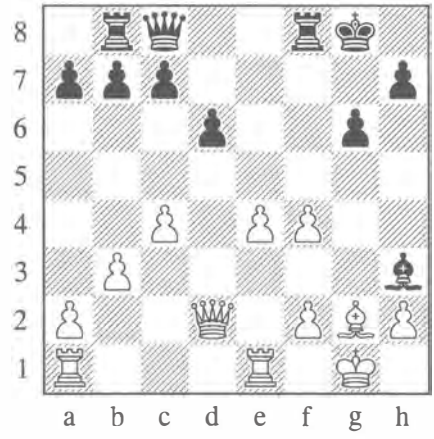
Now the e2-e4 advance will be very strong.

17...♖b8 18.e4 f4!?

Black decided to jettison a pawn in order to keep the e-file closed.

19.gxf4 ♗h3

We have been following the game Zilberman – Gonzalez, Mallorca 2004. Now White could have secured his advantage with:

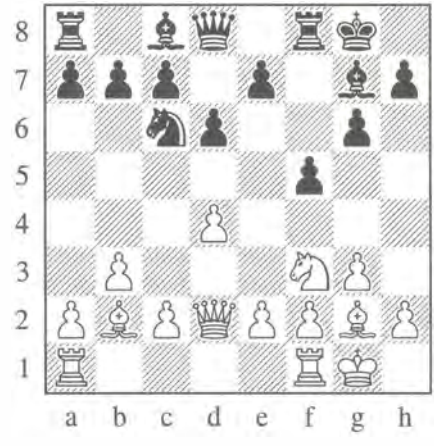


20.♕d5†!N ♖f7 21.f3

With the following point:

21...♗xg2 22.♔xg2 ♕d8 23.♖ad1 ♕h4 24.e5 ♕xf4 25.exd6 cxd6 26.♖e7±

B42) 9...♘c6



This is by far the most popular and challenging move.

10.♘e1!

A very important idea, otherwise Black is just ready to carry out ...e7-e5.

10...♕e8

Definitely the safest reply. White forces favourable simplifications after:

10...e5?! 11.♗xc6!

White can also give a preliminary check on d5, but I do not believe it changes the evaluation either way.

11...bxc6 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♘d3 e4

After 13...♕e7 14.♕c3! Black is in trouble.

14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♕c3† ♕f6

Here I found a very strong new idea:



16.♘e5!N

The previously played 16.♕xf6† ♔xf6 17.♘c5, Kolev – Danailov, Zaragoza 1994, does not promise much against the correct 17...♖d8!N 18.♖fd1 ♖d5! with good chances to hold.

16...♗e6

The tactical justification for White's last move is seen after 16...♖e8? 17.♕xc6 winning a pawn.

17.♕a5

White intends to strengthen his position with ♖ad1 next. His positional advantage is beyond any doubts.

11.f4!?

Absolutely harmless is 11.e4 fxe4 12.♗xe4 e5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5!, as correctly pointed out by Stohl in *ChessBase Magazine 66*.

11...e5 12.♗d5†!

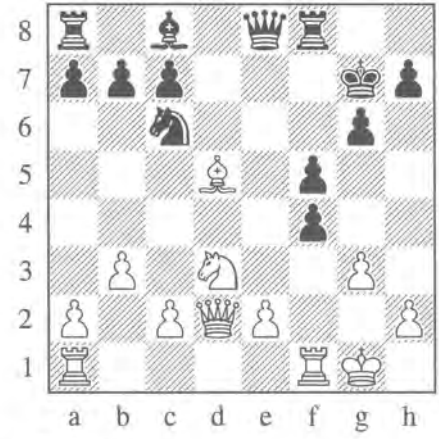
On this occasion this intermediate check is an important nuance.

12...♔h8 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♘d3 exf4

Black is certainly not helped by 14...e4 15.♗xg7† ♔xg7 16.♕c3† ♖f6 17.♘e5! and White dominates the board, as once again pointed out by Stohl.

15.♗xg7† ♔xg7

This was Stohl – Kindermann, Portoroz 1998. Now I suggest the following improvement:



16.♖xf4!N

With the simple plan of e2-e4, when the opening of the centre will clearly be to White's advantage, for instance:

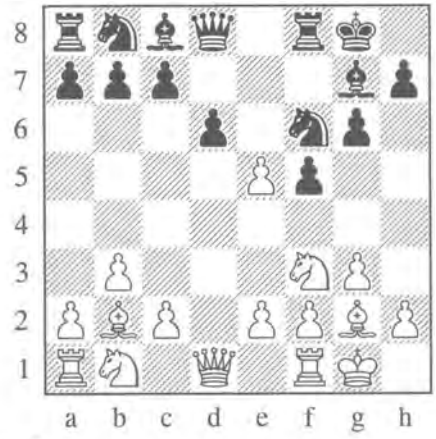
16...♕e7 17.e4 ♕f6 18.♖e1 ♘e7 19.♖f2!

White is much more active.

B5) 7...e5?!

This is a thematic idea, but it is unjustified here.

8.dxe5



8...♘g4

As usual, the alternative is:

8...♘fd7 9.♘a3!

This demonstrates the flexibility of White's system. The knight is heading for c4.

9...♘c6 10.♘c4 dxe5



Michna – Dworakowska, Warsaw 2004.

11.e4!N

This thematic move looks very strong for White, as Black will experience serious problems connected with the defence of the e5-pawn. Here is an illustrative line:

11...♘c5

Black loses a pawn after: 11...♘f6 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘fxe5 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5 ♘xe4 15.♗xc7 ♖d7 16.♗e5±

11...fxe4 12.♕d5† followed by 13.♕xe4 also leaves Black under pressure.

12.♕d5†! ♕xd5 13.exd5 ♘b4 14.♘cxe5 ♘xd5 15.♗a3 b6 16.♘g5 ♗b7 17.♗xc5 bxc5 18.♖ae1 ♖fe8 19.♘d3

Black loses a pawn.

9.♘a3!

Once again this move works well.

9...♘c6

Clearly in White's favour is:

9...♘xe5?! 10.♘xe5 dxe5

10...♗xe5? loses material after 11.♕d5†.

11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.♘b5 ♘a6 13.♖ad1 ♗d7

The main point is that 13...♖e8 runs into 14.♗d5† ♔h8 15.♗f7! ♖f8 16.♗a3 c5 (Obviously 16...♖xf7? loses after 17.♖d8† ♗f8 18.♗xf8) 17.♗c4± with a big advantage, as Black can hardly do anything to oppose White's penetration along the d-file.

Now in the game Komljenovic – Milla de Marco, Malaga 2002, White missed an easy win:



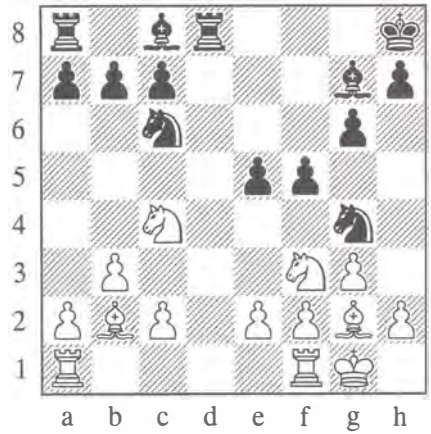
14.♖xd7!N ♖xd7 15.♗xb7 ♖b8 16.♗xa6 ♖b6 17.♗c8 ♖d8 18.♘xa7+–

10.♕d5† ♔h8 11.♘c4 dxe5

No better is 11...♘gxe5 12.♘fxe5 dxe5 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♘xe5± and White is a healthy pawn up, Reeh – Juhnke, Germany 1988.

12.♕xd8 ♖xd8

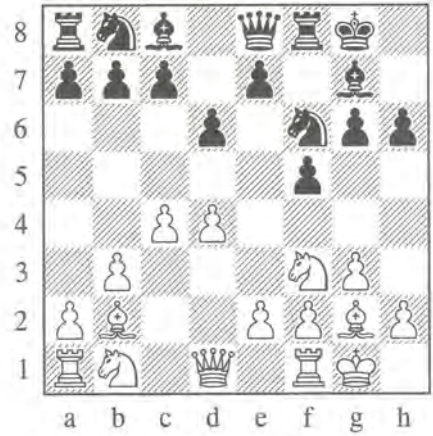
This position was reached in Dankert – Schian, Germany 1997. Now White has a simple and strong idea at his disposal:



13.♘g5!N ♖e8 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.f3 ♘h6 16.♘a5±

With a large positional advantage.

B6) 7...h6 8.c4 ♕e8



Sometimes Black plays 8...g5 first, but in most cases it just leads to a transposition of moves.

9.♘bd2 g5 10.e3!?

A slightly unusual concept. White refrains from the thematic plan of e2-e4, instead opting to stabilize his position in the centre and kingside, and planning to start an attack on the queenside.

A principled alternative is 10.♕c2 ♕h5 11.e4 (11.d5 is another option). However, after serious investigation I found the positions after 11...f4!? 12.e5 ♘h7, Tratar – Balinov, Charleville 2000, as well as 11...fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♘c6, Makarov – Kontic, Podgorica 1993, to be pretty double-edged.

10...♘a6

There are numerous alternatives.

Nobody appears to have tried 10...♕h5, probably because of 11.♘e1!. After a queen exchange Black would obviously lose all chances for a successful kingside assault.

10...e5 11.dxe5 ♘g4 12.♕c2 ♘xe5 was Frois – Dias, Algarve 1999. Here I like the thematic 13.♘d4N ♘a6 14.a3± followed by play on the queenside, while f2-f4 might also be an attractive idea at some point.

10...c6

This has been played by Nakamura amongst others. Strangely enough nobody seems to have tried the natural:

11.b4!?N

Curiously the same position has been reached a few times with White to move, having played b2-b4 in one move rather than two. Despite the lost tempo, I nevertheless find White's position to be quite promising.

11...♕h5 12.♖c1

In this position I am not so keen on 12.♘e1 on account of 12...♕xd1 13.♖xd1 a5! 14.b5 ♗e6 followed by ...♖c8 and ...♘bd7 with reasonable counterplay.

12...f4?!

Usually with White's pawn on e3 this idea is unlikely to work. Black should definitely try something else, but I include the text move

for illustrative purposes.

13.exf4 gxf4 14.♖e1 ♖f7 15.c5!±

Black's attack is unlikely to succeed in a position with an open centre. Meanwhile he will have a hard time defending his weaknesses.

10...a5 11.a3

I do not see any point in switching plans with 11.d5, since after 11...c5! Black obtains a decent position, Powell – Posazhennikov, Telford 2005.

11...♕g6 12.♕c2 c6

We are following the game Hornung – Egorov, Augsburg 1995. Here I find it hard to understand why White refrained from the consistent move:

13.b4N

With promising play on the queenside.

10...f4 11.exf4 gxf4

This position occurred in Mohota – Fossum, Catalan Bay 2004. Here I like the following idea:



12.♕e2!?N ♘a6 13.♖ae1

White wastes no time in creating threats against the e7-pawn.

13...♕h5

Defending e7 indirectly, since 14.♕xe7?? ♖e8 wins the queen. But White can alter his plans slightly with:

14.♘h4! ♗g4 15.♕d3

White is clearly better.

11.♗c3 c6

Black can try 11...e5, but there is not much difference between this and 10...e5, since after 12.dxe5 ♘d7 13.♘d4! Black is forced to take on e5 with knight. Play continues 13...♘xe5 (13...dxe5? runs into the unpleasant 14.♘e6!±) 14.b4 and White starts his play on the queenside.

12.♕c2 ♕g6 13.♘e1 ♘c7 14.♖d1 ♗d7 15.♘d3 ♘e4

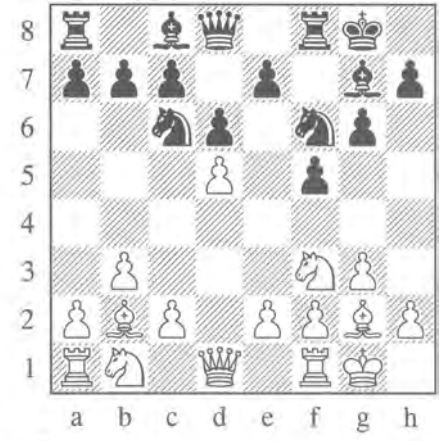
The active 15...f4 does not promise Black a satisfactory game after 16.exf4 gxf4 17.♘f3 fxg3 18.hxg3 ♗g4 19.♖d2! intending ♘h4.

16.♗b2 ♘xd2 17.♖xd2 ♘e8 18.b4±

White has a pleasant game thanks to his spatial superiority, Damljanovic – Teran Alvarez, Dos Hermanas 2000. In the game Black played the slightly careless 18...♘f6, which allowed White to increase his advantage with 19.♘e5!.

B7) 7...♘c6 8.d5

In my opinion the most challenging move, although 8.♘bd2 also deserves attention.



8...♘b4

The other option is:

8...♘a5 9.c4 c5 10.♘bd2!

Again White benefits from the option of developing the knight on d2.

10...a6 11.♕c2

The position resembles the Yugoslav variation of King's Indian Defence, with one major difference that Black's f-pawn is on f5. In my opinion this detail should help White, since it weakens both the e6-square and the e7-pawn, making White's intended e2-e4 advance all the more powerful.

11...b5 12.♖ae1

Also worthy of consideration is 12.♘g5!?N ♖b8 13.♗c3 followed by the penetration of the knight to e6.

12...♖b8 13.♗c3 e5 14.dxe6 ♗xe6

This position occurred in Podzielny – Wieder, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2000. Here I see no reason for White to refrain from the natural move:



15.e4N ♘c6

Clearly inferior is 15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗f5 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘xf6† ♕xf6 19.♕d2! Underlining the misplacement of the knight on a5. 19...b4 20.♘g5±

16.e5 dxe5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♖b6 19.♖e2!±

Despite some simplifications White maintains a useful initiative.

9.c4 a5

There are some other playable options, but White keeps an edge in all lines.

9...c5 10.a3 ♘a6 11.♘c3 ♖b8 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.♘d2 ♘c7 14.b4 b6 15.e3± Black has a solid but rather passive position, Cramling – Rivas Vila, Vila Real 2001.

9...e5 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 reaches the usual favourable pawn structure for White, since it is much easier for him to pursue his play on the queenside. 11.♘d4 ♗c8 12.a3 ♘a6 was played in Bernard – Bauer, Clichy 1997. Now White could have obtained excellent play on the queenside with 13.b4!N, since 13...c6 runs into the strong 14.b5! cxb5 15.♘xb5 with serious pressure.

10.a3 ♘a6 11.♘c3

This time the knight is better off on c3.

11...♗d7 12.♘d4 ♘c5

We have reached a thematic position for the Leningrad system, in which White should be able to maintain slightly better chances.

13.♕c2

13.b4 ♘ce4 is okay for Black.

13...♘g4



14.♖ad1!N

In Rodriguez Lopez – Lopez Pereyra, Pontevedra 2004, White played another

natural move, 14.e3, but a clear drawback of this move is that it weakens the d3-square, which Black managed to utilize quite nicely. 14...♘e5 15.♖fd1 g5 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 ♖xa1 18.♖xa1?! (18.♗xa1 ♘a6) 18...♘cd3 19.♗a3 f4 Black achieved quite nice counterplay, although he later went wrong and lost.

14...f4

This is probably the move that White feared in the aforementioned game. However, he can keep control with the following accurate response:

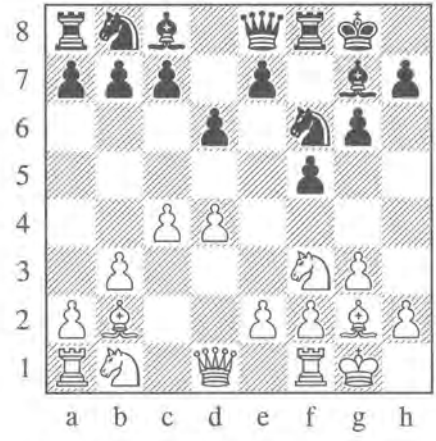
15.♘e4! ♘xe4 16.♕xe4±

With a nice position.

B8) 7...♕e8

This is the main continuation.

8.c4



Black has a wide choice here. The main moves are: **B81) 8...e5**, **B82) 8...♘c6**, **B83) 8...♘e4** and **B84) 8...♘a6**.

Besides these, we should also quickly consider:

8...h6 9.♘bd2 g5 reaches a position that was examined in line B6 with 7...h6.

8...c6 9.♘bd2 reaches the note to Black's 8th move in line B3 (7...c6 8.♘bd2 ♕e8 9.c4).

8...♘g4

Black's idea is to prepare a quick ...e7-e5 advance, but White appears to be fully armed for such a development.

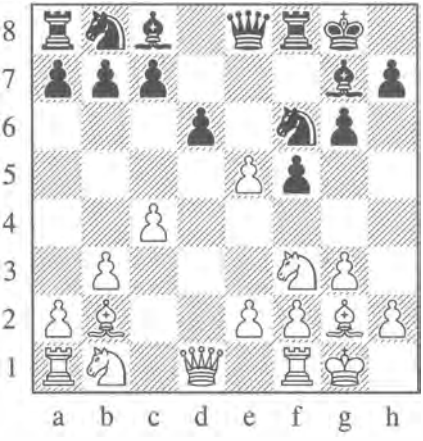
9.h3 ♘h6 10.♘c3 e5

Black has also tried 10...♘f7, but after 11.d5! c5 12.♕c2 ♘a6 13.♖ae1 followed by next e2-e4 White had much better prospects, Headlong – Lyell, Birmingham 2002.

11.dxe5 dxe5 12.e4

We have reached a position examined in line B811 (beginning with 9...♘g4), found just below.

B81) 8...e5 9.dxe5



As is customary for such a position, Black can now choose between two knight moves: **B811) 9...♘g4** and **B812) 9...♘fd7**.

B811) 9...♘g4 10.♘c3 dxe5

10...♘xe5 reaches a position considered in line B812 below.

11.h3 ♘h6

11...♘f6? loses material after 12.♘b5 or 12.♘d5.

12.e4 ♘c6

The most natural reaction would seem to be 12...f4

However, it turns out that White is ideally positioned to respond with immediate action in the centre.

13.♘d5!

Seizing the initiative.

13...♘a6 14.gxf4 c6

Just terrible is: 14...exf4? 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♕d4† ♔g8 17.♘f6†+–

15.fxe5!?

A natural piece sacrifice, but it was also quite acceptable to play: 15.♗xe5 cxd5 16.cxd5±

15...cxd5 16.exd5

White has a strategically winning position thanks to his central pawn mass, Mamedyarov – Reinderman, Warsaw 2005.

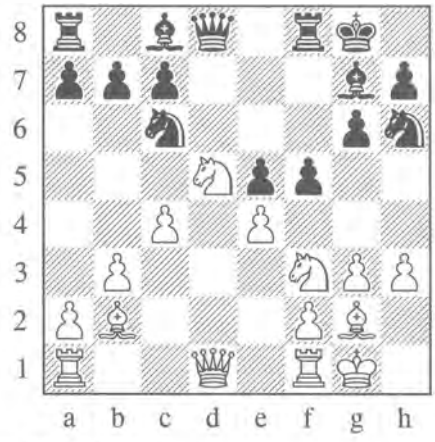
13.♘d5 ♕d8

In his annotations for *ChessBase Magazine*, GM Michael Roiz pointed out the line 13...fxe4 14.♘g5 ♕d8 15.♘xe4 ♘d4 as a possible improvement for Black. Still, in my opinion White retains the better chances after the resolute 16.f4! c6 17.fxe5 cxd5 18.♖xf8† ♕xf8.



Here White can choose between two promising continuations: 19.cxd5 ♘df5 20.♕e2!?, and 19.♘f6† ♗xf6 20.exf6 ♘e6 21.cxd5, with more than enough compensation for a piece in both cases.

So far we have been following the game Bewersdorff – Tisdall, Gausdal 1990. Now I like the following straightforward line:



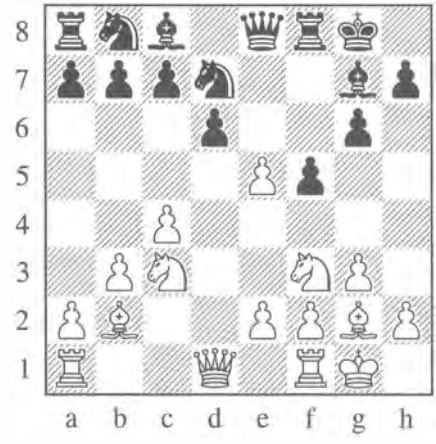
14.♕e2!N fxe4

14...♘f7 is met by the unpleasant 15.♖ad1.

15.♕xe4 ♗f5 16.♕e3 ♘f7 17.♖fd1 ♕c8 18.b4!

White's positional advantage is obvious.

B812) 9...♘fd7 10.♘c3



10...dxe5

The alternative is:

10...♘xe5

As I have stated repeatedly throughout the chapter, this kind of pawn structure should

almost always be favourable for White, who can build long-term pressure against Black's queenside.

11.♕d2

The plan of ♘d5 is not easy to meet.

11...♘bc6

11...♘a6 12.♖ad1 ♘xf3†?! This is an unfortunate decision, but presumably Black had not considered the strong reply. 13.exf3! This excellent decision adds the e-file to White's list of trumps. 13...♘c5 14.♖fe1 ♕d8 15.b4 ♘d7 16.♘d5± and Black was already in serious trouble, Lputian – Malaniuk, Sverdlovsk 1987.

12.♘d5 ♕d8 13.♖ad1

Black's position is not so easy to handle, as demonstrated by the following encounter: 13...♗d7 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.c5! ♗e6 16.♘f4 ♗f7 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♗a3

White's positional edge is beyond any doubts, Harikrishna – Zhang Zhong, Taiyuan 2005.

11.e4 c6

This position has occurred a few times in tournament practice. In general Black's position is pretty sound from a positional point of view, but for the time being he is lagging well behind in development. It seems to me that White should act quickly in order to exploit this trump, which led me to develop a new concept:



12.♗a3!?N ♖f6

Another line is 12...♖f7 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♘g5 ♖f6 15.♕d2 ♘a6 16.♖ad1. I like White's chances in this position, for example: 16...h6 (Black's problems also persist after 16...e4 17.f3!) 17.♘f3 e4 18.♘h4 ♘e5 19.f3! The key strategic idea. 19...exf3 20.♘xf3 and Black faces definite problems, due to his inferior development.

13.exf5!

The best way for White to exploit his lead in development is by opening the centre. Of course the position remains complex, but I would be amazed if it were shown that Black is not worse here.

13...e4 14.♕e2 gxf5 15.♖ad1 ♘a6 16.♘h4 ♘dc5 17.f3!±

Black is starting to encounter real problems.

B82) 8...♘c6

An interesting idea. Black's previous move vacated the d8-square for the knight, so Black is not afraid of the d4-d5 advance.

9.d5

Certainly this is the most principled continuation.

9...♘d8 10.♘c3



10...e5

This is the usual response. I do not see much point for Black in postponing direct action, since White will generally have a greater number of useful waiting moves available. One illustrative example continued 10...h6 11.♕c2 (an interesting alternative is 11.♘b5!?, forcing the awkward 11...♕d7) 11...♕f7 12.e3 ♗d7 13.♖ad1 c6 14.♘d4 ♖c8 15.♕e2± and it is not clear what Black achieved, Smejkal – Kalinitschew, Porz 1992.

11.dxe6 ♘xe6

White has the usual small but long-lasting edge, as is customary for this pawn structure.

12.♕c2 ♗d7

Other moves are:

12...♘e4 13.♖ad1 ♗d7?! was played in Inkiov – Barbero, Plovdiv 1986. Now White missed the simple 14.♘xe4!N fxe4 15.♘d2 which should cause Black serious problems, for instance 15...♗xb2 16.♕xb2 ♗c6 (or 16...♘c5 17.b4 ♘a4 18.♕d4±) 17.♘xe4 ♘f4 18.gxf4 ♗xe4 19.♖d4 ♖xf4 20.♕d2 ♗xg2 21.♖xf4 ♗xf1 22.♕d5† ♔g7 23.♔xf1 with a big advantage.

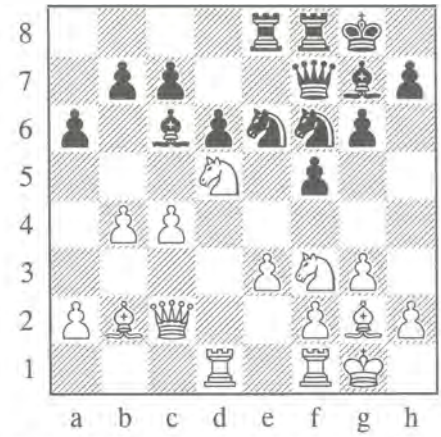
12...f4 13.♘d5 fxg3 14.hxg3 c6 The knight on d5 was hard to tolerate, but the text renders the d6-pawn vulnerable. 15.♘xf6† ♗xf6 16.♖ad1 ♕e7 17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 At this point the game Grott – Leisebein, e-mail 2001, was agreed drawn, although 18.♕c3N would have retained a pleasant edge for White.

13.♖ad1 ♗c6 14.♘d5 ♕f7 15.e3 ♖ae8

This looks like the best arrangement for Black. Nevertheless I still believe White retains the better chances, due to his strong knight.

16.b4 a6

This was Hausrath – Van Beers, Antwerp 1997. Now I think White should have continued:



17.♘d2!N ♘g4 18.♗xg7 ♕xg7 19.♘b3±

White maintains pressure on the queenside, due to ideas such as ♘b3-a5 or c4-c5.

B83) 8...♘e4 9.♘bd2 c6

This looks like Black's best chance to achieve a playable position.

9...♘xd2

This has been almost universally played, but it would be strange if Black could equalize by exchanging knights in a way that costs him three tempos to the opponent's one. Nimzowitsch would not have approved!

10.♕xd2 ♘d7

After 10...c6 11.d5 White forces a favourable exchange of the dark-squared bishops. Here is one example: 11...♗xb2 12.♕xb2 ♕f7, Boehm – Kuhnert, Bavaria 2007, and now the obvious 13.e4!N fxe4 14.♘g5 ♕g7 15.♕d2 would secure White's advantage.

There is also 10...♘c6 11.d5 ♘e5 (Too passive is 11...♘d8?! 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7, Khasin – Videki, Budapest 1990, when the simple 13.c5!N would have brought White a clear plus.) 12.♘d4! leading to a very comfortable position for White, who can follow the natural plan of carrying out e2-e4 under favourable circumstances. The following encounter is a good example: 12...♗d7 13.f4 ♘f7 14.e4

c5 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.exf5 gxf5 17.♖ae1 and White obtained a clear advantage in Necada – Krouzel, Czech Republic 1995.

11.e4!

This thematic idea works perfectly at this moment.

11...fxe4 12.♘g5 ♘f6

Black achieved a good result after 12...♗h6 13.♗xe4 ♘f6 14.♗g2 c6, Golod – Gurevich, Venacu 2006, but it was in no way related to the quality of his opening, since at this moment White could have obtained a nice position by means of: 15.f4 ♗f5 16.♖ae1 ♕d7 17.♕e3!±

13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 e6

Here I tried to improve Black's play and considered 14...c6N, but Black is very far from equalizing after the natural 15.♖fe1 ♕f7 16.d5! c5 17.♖e3, due to the weakness of the e7-pawn.

15.f4 a6 16.♖ae1±

White maintained a clear positional advantage, Navara – Bosboom Lanchava, Dubai 2005.

10.♘xe4!

This is a committal move which demands accurate follow-up play. However, if White gets it right then the rewards are well worth the effort.

10...fxe4 11.♘g5 d5



12.♕d2!N

A powerful prophylactic novelty.

The immediate 12.f3 allowed Black to achieve counterplay by means of 12...h6 13.♘h3 exf3 14.exf3 dxc4 15.bxc4 c5! in Benkovic – Meijers, Biel 2005. This led me to propose the text move, which prepares the undermining of Black's centre.

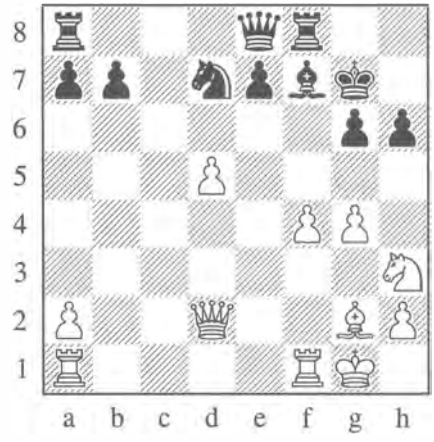
12...h6 13.♘h3

It is not so easy for Black to meet the planned f2-f3. I analysed the following line, which seems to represent quite accurate play from both sides:

13...♗f5 14.f3 exf3 15.exf3 dxc4

Or 15...♕f7 16.c5 ♘a6 17.♖ac1 g5 18.♘f2 ♖ae8 19.♖fe1 e6 20.♖e3± with a positional edge.

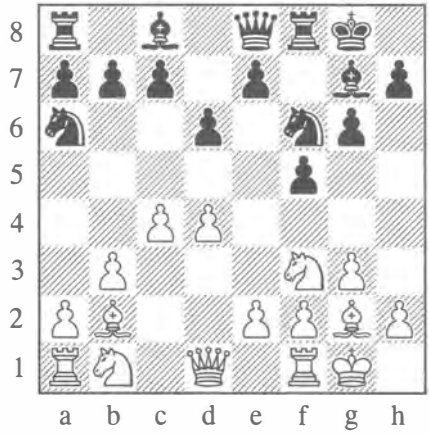
16.bxc4 ♘d7 17.g4! ♗e6 18.d5 cxd5 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.cxd5 ♗f7 21.f4↑



White has a serious initiative, due to the exposed position of Black's king.

B84) 8...♘a6

The main line.



9.♕c2!?

The most common move has been 9.♘bd2, but I prefer the text for a few different reasons. First and foremost, by defending the bishop on b2 White eliminates the typical idea of ...e7-e5, intending to meet dxe5 with ...♘g4 or ...♘d7. Secondly, it could be useful to preserve the option of developing the knight on c3 in certain positions.

After the text move the big question is whether a timely ...♘b4 might prove disruptive. This idea will be dealt with in due course, but for the time being I will provide a brief summary of White's ninth move alternatives.

9.d5 has been tried by some strong players (including no less than Kasparov, although this was back in 1988), but after 9...c5! Black gets a decent position according to theory.

9.♘bd2

This has been the most popular move, and is still a reasonable try for an advantage.

9...e5 10.dxe5 ♘g4

10...♘d7 11.♗a3! ♘xe5 is a simple transposition.

11.♗a3!

A thematic idea in this variation. It is important for White to prevent the d-pawn from recapturing on e5, as occurred in the following line: 11.♕c2 dxe5 12.e4 f4 with counterplay, Belov – Goldin, Moscow 1992.

11...♘xe5 12.♖b1

I believe White should be able to claim a slight edge from this position. One example continued:

12...♘c5?!

Black should probably look for an improvement here.

13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.♗b2

Also worthy of consideration was: 14.b4!? ♘d7 15.c5 ♘f6 16.♗b2 ♕e7 17.cxd6 ♕xd6 18.♕c2±

14...♕e7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.b4 ♘d7 17.e3 ♖b8 18.♘b3 ♘f6 19.♘a5

White keeps definite pressure, Sasikiran – Babu, Chennai 2000.



Returning to the main line, we will analyse three principal responses: **B841) 9...h6**, **B842) 9...♘b4** and **B843) 9...♖b8**.

The other main move is:

9...c6

This usually transposes to a different line.

10.♘bd2

This is obviously the right square for the knight; instead if 10.♘c3?! e5 Black is fine.

10...♖b8

10...h6 11.♗c3 reaches a position from line B841 below.

It looks too slow for Black to play 10...♗d7 11.a3 h6 12.e4 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♕xe4 ♗f5 15.♕e3 ♕f7 16.♘h4! and White was better, Strikovic – Hidalgo Santana, El Sauzal 2003.

11.a3 b5 12.♖ac1 ♗d7 13.b4

We have transposed to line B843.

B841) 9...h6 10.♘bd2 c6

Black can also continue his kingside expansion without delay.

10...g5

However, in this case he must reckon with the immediate central strike:

11.e4



11...fxe4

An interesting position appears after 11...f4 12.e5 (The premature 12.gxf4?! ♘h5! promises Black excellent play on the kingside.) 12...♘h5 This was Zagorskis – Manik, Hlohovec 1994. Now I like 13.♘e1!?N with the idea of preventing the possible ...g4 followed by ...f3, while also preparing to meet ...♗f5 with ♗e4. It looks like White keeps some advantage, for example: 13...dxe5 (13...♘b4 14.♕d1 g4 15.♗e4 dxe5 16.dxe5 ♘c6 17.♘d3 f3 18.h3!±) 14.dxe5 ♗f5 15.♕d1! This underlines the questionable position of Black's knight. (not so clear is 15.♗e4 ♘b4!) 15...fxg3 16.fxg3! ♖d8 17.♗c3± Black will have a hard time dealing with the dual threats of 18.g4 and 18.♗xb7.

12.♘xe4 ♕g6

If 12...♘xe4 13.♕xe4 Black cannot play 13...♗f5 as the b7-pawn will hang. (That is the reason why I consider 10...c6 to be the main line!)

13.♘xf6† ♕xf6

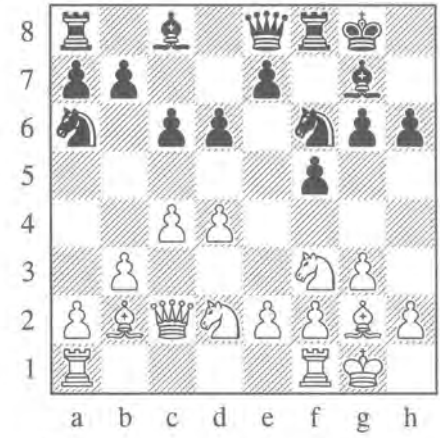
13...♖xf6?! 14.♕xg6 ♖xg6 15.♖fe1 leads to a favourable position for White, since Black's rook is clearly misplaced on g6.

14.♖ae1 c6

In Bagirov – Gurevich, Helsinki 1992, Black tried 14...♗f5 15.♕d2 ♖ae8. Now White should have continued with the typical plan: 16.♖e3N e6 17.♖fe1 c6 18.♗c3± maintaining better chances.

15.♖e3 ♗f5 16.♕d2 ♖f7 17.♖fe1 ♖e8 18.♗c3!±

We have been following the game Dreev – Motwani, Berlin 1991. White has steadily improved his position and is now ready for d4-d5.



11.♗c3!?

I like this move the most. Somehow I was not fully satisfied with the other options:

After 11.a3 g5 12.e4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♗f5 15.♕e3 Black has the interesting 15...♘c5!? which allowed her to activate her misplaced knight, Minogina – T. Kosintseva, Kolontaevo 1997.

11.e4 fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♗f5 14.♕e2 (or 14.♕e3 ♘b4 15.♘e1 e5! with counterplay) 14...g5 15.d5 ♗xb2 16.♕xb2 c5 was double-edged in Pilaj – De la Riva Aguado, Turin 2006.

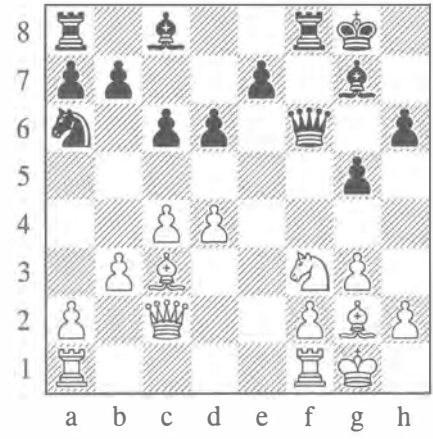
Black also manages to create counterplay after 11.♖ae1 g5 12.e4 ♘b4! 13.♕c3 a5!. Here we can see the drawback of the move ♖ae1. The a2-pawn is hanging, while in the event of 14.a3 Black has 14...♘xe4 15.♘xe4 fxe4 16.♖xe4 ♗f5 with counterplay.

11...g5 12.e4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 ♕g6

Another line is 13...♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♗f5 15.♕e3 ♕d7. This position has occurred in a couple of games. Here I found the new idea 16.♖ae1!?N ♖ae8 17.h4. I think it is useful to weaken Black's kingside. 17...g4 18.♘d2 ♘c7 (White is also better after 18...d5 19.f3!) 19.d5 ♗xc3 20.♕xc3 e5 21.dxc6 bxc6 22.b4 and White has promising play on the queenside.

14.♘xf6† ♕xf6

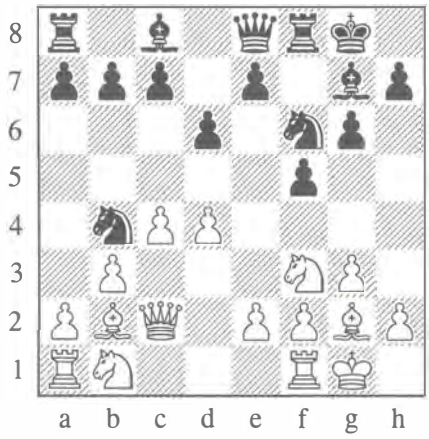
This position was reached in Koutsin – Gavrikov, Neu Isenburg 1992. At this point I see nothing wrong with continuing White's usual strategy by means of:



15.♖ae1N ♗f5 16.♕d2 e6 17.♖e3±

White keeps the better chances.

B842) 9...♘b4



10.♕d2!N

It is slightly bizarre that this natural and strong move should be a novelty. I present my analysis here.

10...a5

It looks inadvisable for Black to play 10...c5 as after 11.♘c3 the moves ...f5 and ...c5 do not combine well.

11.♘c3 c6 12.♖fe1!

White intends to carry out the thematic e2-e4. The idea is standard, but it is vital to anticipate Black's typical reaction as mentioned in the next note.

12...♗d7

It is important to appreciate that Black cannot play 12...♘e4? in view of the forcing line: 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♘g5 d5 15.a3 ♘a6 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♕xa5 and White wins a pawn.

13.a3 ♘a6 14.e4 fxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♖xe4 ♗f5 17.♖e2!?

This is justified by some concrete tactical features of the position, although the simple 17.♖ee1 also looks quite promising.

17...♗g4 18.♖ae1!

The point of the previous move.

18...e6

The knight on f3 is untouchable: 18...♗xf3? 19.♖xe7 ♕d8 20.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 21.d5† ♔g8 22.♕d4+–

The same method also works after 18...♖xf3 19.♗xf3 ♗xf3 20.♖xe7 ♕f8 21.♖xg7†! ♕xg7 22.d5 when Black is helpless against the threats on the long diagonal.

19.♕e3 ♘c7 20.h3 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3

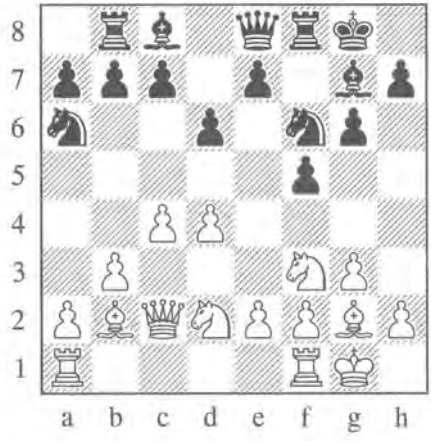
White has an obvious positional advantage.

B843) 9...♖b8

This principled move is the most popular continuation. Black hopes to exploit the fact that White plans to develop his knight to d2, by preparing the advance of the b-pawn.

10.♘bd2

This is the most flexible square for the knight. It can also go to c3 of course, but I do not see any reason to fear the advance of the b-pawn.



10...b5

Black naturally follows his plan. Occasionally he has tried:

10...c5

I am rather sceptical about Black's opening play – I do not see any harmony between his various moves. White should be able to maintain a nice edge with natural moves, for instance:

11.♖ad1 ♗d7 12.♖fe1 ♘b4 13.♕b1 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♕f7

This was seen in Schiffer – Lutz, Groningen 1995. Here White missed a very nice idea, which was quite understandable as it is not at all obvious. Therefore I recommend that the reader pays close attention to what follows:



15.♘4f3!N

White not only intends ♘g5 followed by e4, but also c4-c5.

15...h6

If 15...♘c6 16.♘g5 ♕e8 17.e4 White is much better, as his pieces are optimally placed for the opening of the centre.

16.c5!

This temporary pawn sacrifice underlines Black's poor coordination.

16...dxc5 17.♘e5 ♕e8 18.♕c1 ♘a6 19.e4!

White has fantastic play for the pawn, for instance:

19...f4 20.gxf4 ♘h5 21.f5 gxf5 22.♘xd7 ♕xd7 23.♘c4 ♕c7 24.exf5±

White dominates.

11.a3 c6

Other possibilities:

11...c5?! soon leads to trouble for Black: 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.cxb5 ♕xb5 14.♘d4! ♕e8

15.b4 ♘e6 (15...♘ce4 does not change the assessment: 16.♘c6 ♘xd2 17.♕xd2 ♖b7 18.♖ac1±) 16.♕b3 ♕f7 17.♘c6 ♖b7 18.♖ac1 ♖c7 19.♖c2 White enjoyed a pleasant advantage due to her strong knight on c6, Cramling – E. Berg, Malmo 2001.

11...♗b7 12.♖ac1 e6 13.b4 White slowly improves his position on the queenside, while Black suffers, due to his badly placed knight on a6. 13...bxc4 14.♕xc4 h6 15.♘b3 ♕c8 16.♘h4 ♗xg2 17.♘xg2 ♘d5 This was Sundararajan – Sharma, New Delhi 2007. Now 18.♗a1N would be a useful move that gives White a pleasant game, for instance: 18...♖b6 19.f3 f4 20.♘a5 and White has the better chances.

11...h6 12.♖ac1 ♗b7N

This looks like the best way for Black to proceed along independent paths.

12...c6 13.♘e1! reaches the note to Black's 12th move in the main line below.

12...c5?! is the only move to have been played, but it looks too risky to open the queenside. 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 14.cxb5 ♖xb5 15.♘d4 ♖b6 16.♘c4 ♖a6? (16...♖b8 was essential, although even here 17.♘a5 leaves Black struggling against the imminent knight invasion on c6.) 17.b4 ♘a4?! (Relatively best was 17...♘e6 although 18.♘xe6 ♗xe6 19.♗b7 wins an exchange for very little.) 18.b5 1–0 Kulczycki – Vieira, Internet 2005.

13.b4 ♘e4 14.♘e1! ♘xd2

Or 14...bxc4 15.♘xc4 followed by ♘d3 and f3.

15.♕xd2 bxc4 16.♖xc4 ♕b5 17.♖c2 e6 18.♗xb7 ♖xb7 19.♘d3

White has better prospects, since Black somehow fails to solve the problem of his misplaced knight. Here is an illustrative line: 19...g5 20.♖fc1 ♕d5 21.a4! ♗xd4 22.♗xd4 ♕xd4 23.b5 ♘c5

Or 23...♘b8 24.♖xc7±

24.♘xc5 dxc5 25.♕xd4 cxd4 26.♖xc7

The rook endgame is difficult for Black.

12.♖ac1

White can also start with 12.b4, which is likely to transpose after 12...♘c7 13.♖ac1 ♗d7 14.cxb5!.

12...♗d7

A logical follow-up, although Black can also try 12...h6. White carried out a nice manoeuvre in the following encounter: 13.♘e1! g5 14.♘d3 A perfect square for White's knight, where it not only controls several important central squares, but also clears the diagonal for the light-squared bishop. 14...♗d7 15.e3± White achieved better prospects in Cramling – Movsziszian, Vila Real 2001.

13.b4 ♘c7



14.cxb5!

An important moment. White exploits the fact that Black cannot recapture with the c6-pawn, which will now remain a long-term target.

14...♖xb5

White is also better after: 14...♘xb5 15.♘b3±

15.♘b3 ♘cd5

Black is partially compensated by his control over the central light squares, but White's chances remain preferable.

16.e3 ♘e4

Somewhat stronger was 16...♕b8 although even here White maintains pressure after 17.♘fd2 ♖c8 18.♖fe1. The next step in improving the position will either be ♗g2-f1 or f2-f3 followed by e3-e4.

17.♘fd2!

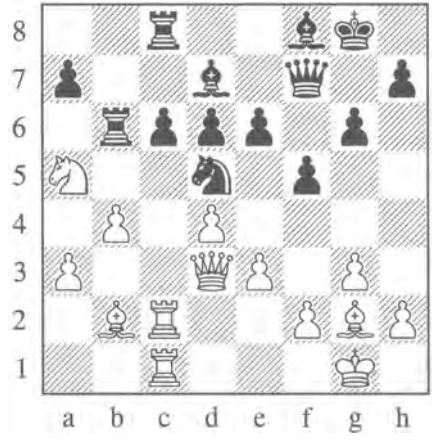
It is useful for White to exchange a pair of knights.

17...♘xd2 18.♕xd2 ♕f7 19.♘a5 ♖c8 20.♖c2

White's play is straightforward and easy to understand. At the same time, and most importantly, it is also highly effective.

20...♖b6 21.♖fc1 ♗f8 22.♕d3 e6

We have been following the game Ruck – Pflug, Austria 2004. At this point I like the following idea:



23.f3N±

I believe that this move, followed up with e3-e4, would pose serious problems for the defence and thus be the most accurate.

To be fair, I should add that White was also clearly better in the game and went on to win in nice style.

Conclusion:

The system with an early b3 and ♗b2 is less popular than the official main line involving c4 and ♘c3, but it brings certain advantages, the main one being flexibility. It is especially useful to preserve the option of developing the queen's knight on either c3 or d2, only making a final decision once the opponent's intentions have been revealed. Later White can aim for the standard e2-e4 break, although depending on the circumstances he might also elect to keep the centre closed and instead focus his attention on the queenside. The black position is playable and contains plenty of resources, but in general it seems to me that White's chances are higher.

Chapter 18



Dutch Defence

St Petersburg Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 g6

2.c4

A) 2...f5 3.h4! 290
A1) 3...♗g7 290
A2) 3...♘f6 291
B) 2...♗g7 292

A) after 2...f5



3.h4!

A1) note to 4...c5



8.dxe5!N

B) after 15...bxc6



16.e4!N

1.d4 g6 2.c4

In this chapter we shall consider two lines where Black uses the Modern move order to reach a Dutch. We must be careful to avoid being tricked into a line of the Leningrad Dutch that is not part of our repertoire. As Black is toying with a "modern" version of the Leningrad, the name St Petersburg Dutch seems appropriate.

The lines we shall look at are **A) 2...f5** and **B) 2...♗g7 3.♘f3 f5**.

A) 2...f5

Black heads directly for the Leningrad System of the Dutch. It is important to know that here we have a strong punch that foils Black's plans:



3.h4!

Black will not be allowed an easy life on his way to the Dutch. The subtle plan is h4-h5. The split now depends on which kingside piece Black decides to develop first: **A1) 3...♗g7** or **A2) 3...♘f6**.

A1) 3...♗g7 4.h5 c5

Black's only chance is to search for counterplay on the long diagonal. Normal development would not work here. For example:

4...d6 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 e5 7.♗g5 ♕d7



This is Zsinka – Danner, Oberwart 2000, and now White has a strong possibility:

8.dxe5!N ♘xe5

Worse is 8...dxe5 9.♘b5! (threatening 10.♕xd7† ♔xd7 11.0–0–0†) 9...♕f7 10.♕d5! and Black cannot avoid losing material.

9.♘xe5 ♗xe5

Once again the pawn recapture 9...dxe5 runs into 10.♘b5!. Now I examined the following line: 10...a6 11.♕xd7† ♔xd7 12.♖d1† ♔c6 13.hxg6! axb5 (instead 13...hxg6 loses instantly to 14.♖xh8 ♗xh8 15.♖d8!) 14.cxb5† ♔xb5 15.♖xh7 ♖xh7 16.gxh7 ♗e6 (if 16...♘f6 then 17.♗h6!) 17.e4† ♔c6 18.hxg8=♕ ♖xg8 19.exf5 ♗xf5 20.♗c4 White's position is technically winning, due to his extra pawn.

10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♖xh8 ♗xh8 12.♕d2

Black's position looks very shaky with his king on e8.

5.d5 ♕a5†

There is not a lot of sense in 5...♕b6 as White is clearly better after 6.♘c3. For example: 6...g5 7.♕c2 ♕f6 8.e4 d6 Conquest – E. Berg, Saint Vincent 2000, and now the natural 9.exf5N ♗xf5 10.♗d3 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ♘d7 12.♘ge2 ♘e5 13.♕c2 would have given White a clear advantage.

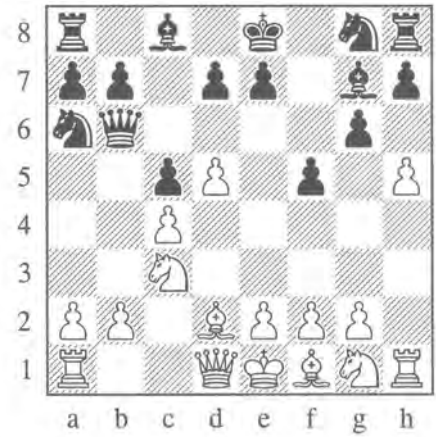
6.♗d2

The most natural reaction, but also worthy of consideration is the new 6.♘c3N, since after 6...♗xc3† 7.bxc3 ♕xc3† 8.♗d2 ♕g7 9.♘f3 White has powerful compensation for the missing pawn.

6...♕b6 7.♘c3 ♘a6

More challenging was 7...♕xb2, but at the same time it is pretty dangerous, since after 8.♖h3! ♕b6 9.♖b1 ♕d8 10.d6 exd6 11.♘b5 White builds up a powerful initiative.

The position after the text move was reached in Lieder – Bruhn, Travemuende 2004, and now White has a simple yet strong move:



8.♘f3!N

It is not so clear how Black can complete his development. For example:

8...♘f6

It is still dangerous to grab the b-pawn: 8...♕xb2 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.♖b3 ♕a5 11.d6! White has the initiative.

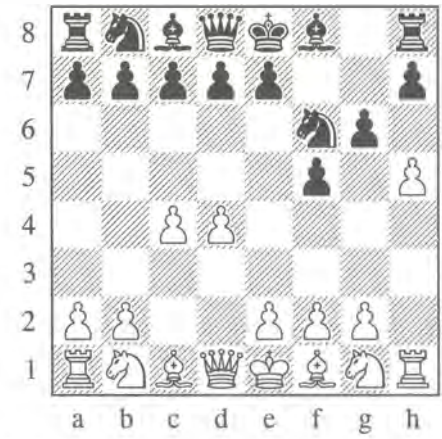
9.h6 ♗f8 10.♘a4 ♕d8 11.♗c3 d6 12.♘g5

Black's position looks extremely dubious.

A2) 3...♘f6

Despite initial appearances, this does not stop White's plan:

4.h5



4...♗g7

In my opinion this is Black's best choice from an unappealing selection. Let's have a look at the alternatives:

4...gxh5 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗g5 0–0 7.♘h3 ♘c6 This is Khismatullin – Golubenko, St Petersburg 2004, and now the straightforward 8.e3N d6 9.♘f4± would secure White a clear advantage.

4...♘xh5

This is the most critical move, but White whips up an initiative with a thematic exchange sacrifice:

5.♖xh5 gxh5 6.e4 ♗g7

Not much would be changed by: 6...d6 7.♕xh5† ♔d7 8.♕xf5† e6 9.♕h3 White is clearly better, as the following line illustrates: 9...c6 10.♘f3 ♔c7 11.♘c3 e5 12.♕g3 ♘d7 This is S. Atalik – Skembris, Kastoria 1996, and here White could have struck with: 13.c5!N It is hard to believe Black can hold. The following line is quite typical: 13...♕f6 14.♗g5 ♕e6 15.0–0–0 ♖g8 16.cxd6† ♗xd6 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♖xd6! With a winning attack.

7.♕xh5† ♔f8 8.♕xf5† ♔g8 9.♘f3 d6 10.♕h5 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♗d7 12.♘c3 ♗e8

So far this is Obsivac – Civin, Olomouc 1995, and now there is an obvious improvement:



13.♕h3!N e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♘h4±

White's compensation is more than sufficient.

5.h6

A continuation that is as strong as it is tempting.

5...♗f8 6.♘c3 d6 7.♗g5

I also like the following line: 7.♘f3 e6 8.♕c2!?N ♗e7 9.e4 0–0 (9...fxe4 is very dangerous for Black after 10.♘xe4 ♘c6 11.♘eg5! and Black cannot even castle: 11...0–0? Due to 12.♘xh7! with a winning attack.) 10.exf5 exf5 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.0–0 White retains a comfortable advantage, since Black's king cannot feel safe with a white pawn on h6.

7...e6

This position has occurred five times in practice, but White has yet to choose the following natural try:

8.♘f3!?N ♗e7 9.g3

White has a comfortable plus after:

9...0–0 10.♗g2 ♘g4 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.♕d2±

He can continue either with ♘g5 followed by f2-f3 and e2-e4, or even ♕g5.

B) 2...♗g7 3.♘f3 f5



Because we have already played c2-c4, a direct transposition to the Dutch will create some differences compared to my recommended anti-Dutch system. You might think this move order is too rare to be important, but you would be wrong. Tricky guys such as Mikhail Gurevich play like this with Black, and so might your opponent!

In this section I want to examine some lines where there are differences compared with the main anti-Dutch system I recommend for White.

Another move order that heads the same way is 3...d6 4.g3 f5 5.♗g2 ♘f6.

4.g3 ♘f6 5.♗g2 0–0

Attempting to carry out ...e7-e5 without castling would not cause White any problems: 5...d6 6.b3 e5

If 6...0–0 7.♗b2 and we get the main line.

7.dxe5 ♘g4

If 7...dxe5 then 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8 and the exposed black king gifts White many tempos. For example: 9.♗b2 (certainly not 9.♘xe5? ♘fd7!) 9...e4 This is Ruiz – Foygel, USA 1997, and here I developed a new and natural line for White: 10.♘g5N ♔e7 11.♘c3 c6 Black has to cover the b5- and

d5-squares. 12.0–0–0 Next White will play f2-f3, breaking up the black pawn chain, when his lead in development starts to tell. For instance: 12...h6 13.♘h3 ♘a6 14.f3 exf3 15.exf3 ♔f7 16.♖he1 ♘c5 17.♗a3 ♗f8 18.♔b2! White has definite pressure.

8.♗b2 ♘xe5

8...0–0 would transpose to the 7...e5-line that is considered briefly below.

9.♘c3

White has the more desirable pawn structure. The following line is just one more example that shows Black's structure is quite unpleasant:

9...♘xf3† 10.♗xf3 ♘c6 11.♕d2 0–0

Here in the game Smejkal – Biolek, Czech Republic 1994, White could have tried an aggressive line:



12.♗d5†!?N ♔h8 13.h4

With the obvious idea of advancing the h-pawn further.

13...h6

13...h5 allows 14.♘e4!? ♘e5 15.♘g5 with an initiative.

14.0–0–0

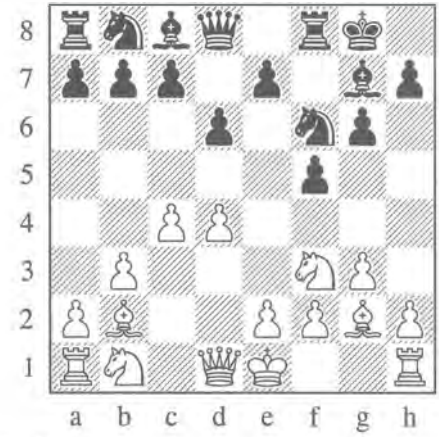
White's position looks very promising to me.

6.b3 d6

I did not find any difference if Black reacts with an early 6...c5, as after 7.♗b2 ♘e4 8.0–0 ♘c6 9.e3 the play will eventually transpose to a position that was examined in the 6...c5-line in the previous chapter.

7.♗b2

After thematic moves such as 7...c6 or 7...♕e8, White responds with 8.0–0 and the play transposes to the previous chapter, but there are several possibilities where we reach a slightly different position because of our early c2-c4.



7...♘e4

The most challenging option; other continuations are not so serious:

7...e5 8.dxe5 ♘g4 9.♘c3 ♘xe5 (Recapturing with the pawn does not work out well for Black: 9...dxe5 10.h3 e4 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.hxg4 exf3 13.♗xf3± This is Tukmakov – Tseitlin, Odessa 1976. The point is that after 13...fxg4 14.♗d5† ♔h8 15.0–0–0 Black is in big trouble.) 10.♕d2 White achieves the better pawn structure, which promises him lasting pressure.

7...♘c6 This allows 8.d5. I do not see any reason Black should provoke d4-d5, which is often a thematic move for White in this line. Let's see one typical example: 8...♘b8 9.♘d4!? Preventing the advance of the c-pawn. 9...a5 10.♘c3 ♘a6 11.0–0 ♘c5 12.e3 ♘g4 13.♕c2

♗d7 14.♖ad1 ♘e5 15.h3 ♕c8 16.♔h2 c6 This is Archangelsky – Henson, Montreal 1998, and now after the natural 17.f4N ♘f7 18.♖fe1 White would prepare the thematic e3-e4, retaining clearly the better chances.

8.0–0

I also examined 8.♘bd2 ♘c6 and I tried to make it work for White: 9.♘xe4 fxe4 10.♘g5 Unfortunately, after 10...e5 11.♘xe4 exd4 12.0–0 ♗f5 Black is doing fine.

After 8.♘c3 ♘c6 we cannot profit from this move order and should simply play 9.0–0, transposing to the main line.

8...♘c6

I think 8...♘d7 is not so relevant, as we could have started with 8.♘c3 when Black has to play 8...♘c6, since 8...♘d7 is impossible in view of 9.♘xe4 fxe4 10.♘g5 winning a pawn.

9.♘c3

After 9.♘bd2 ♘xd2 10.♕xd2 e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♕d5† ♔h8 13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♘g5 ♖d2 15.♗c3 ♖c2! Black is doing fine according to theory.

9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3



Now we have reached an important crossroads for Black.

10...e5

The alternative is:

10...♕e8 11.b4!

In my opinion this is the only chance to fight for an advantage. Black is alright after 11.e4 f4! 12.e5 ♗g4.

11...e5

11...e6 is too passive, as was shown in the following recent example: 12.♕b3 ♘d8 13.♖fe1 h6 14.e4 f4 15.e5 g5 16.d5 And White was clearly better in Dreev – Knudsen, Helsingor 2009.

12.dxe5

We would be heading for the same position after 12.b5 ♘d8. Black should accept this as 12...♘xd4 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♕xd4± leads to a pawn structure that favours White, Paunovic – Fernandez Siles, La Roda 2008.

12...dxe5

If 12...♘xe5 13.♖c1± and again White has the desired pawn structure.

13.b5 ♘d8



14.e4!?N

I think this is an important novelty. Both games that reached this position saw Black easily solve his opening problems by advancing his pawn to e4. After the novelty my brief analysis runs as follows:

14...f4

The alternative is 14...fxe4, but after 15.♕d5† ♘f7 (or 15...♗e6 16.♕xe4 ♗f5

17.♕e3±) 16.♘d2 White is clearly on top with his better pawn structure.

15.gxf4!

Otherwise I found that it is hard to fight for the advantage.

15...exf4

The main point is that Black cannot recapture with his rook on f4: 15...♖xf4 16.♗xe5! ♗xe5 17.♘xe5± And Black's knight is hanging on d8.

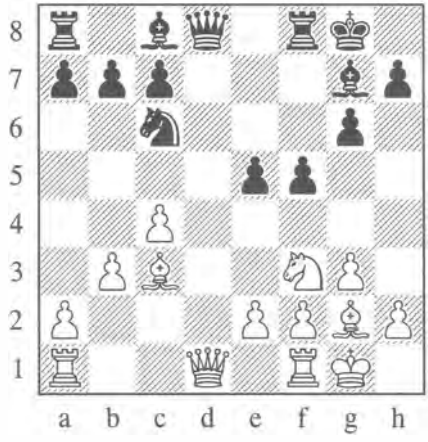
16.e5

Black has a reliable position after 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕d4† ♔g8, but after the text move White retains the better chances.

16...♕e7 17.♖e1±

11.dxe5 dxe5

After 11...♕e8 12.b4 the play would transpose to the 10...♕e8-line.



12.♕d5†

This is another important idea the readers should remember.

12...♔h8

Certainly 12...♕xd5? is a serious mistake. After 13.cxd5 ♘d4 14.♗xd4 exd4 15.♖ac1! White quickly achieved a decisive advantage in the following encounter: 15...♖d8 16.♖xc7 ♖xd5 17.♘g5 ♖d6 18.♖fc1+– Lakunza Oyarbide – Suarez Roa, Elgoibar 1992.

13.♕xd8 ♖xd8 14.♘g5 ♖e8

The alternative is obviously inferior: 14...♖f8 15.♗xc6 bxc6 And here I like 16.♖fd1 with the following nice idea: 16...e4 17.♘f7†! ♔g8 18.♗xg7 ♖xf7 (instead 18...♔xg7 19.♘e5 ♖f6 20.f4! is also strategically difficult for Black) 19.♗e5 Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, White was clearly better in Groszpeter – Videki, Kecskemet 1988.

15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.e4!N



This is a completely new plan in this position. The problem was that after both 16.♖ad1 a5 and 16.♖fd1 ♔g8 I fail to see how to pose Black any serious problems.

16...h6

I also examined 16...♔g8 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♖fe1 e4 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.f3 when White retains a good edge, due to Black's damaged pawn structure and the superiority of the white knight over the black bishop.

17.♘f3 fxe4

After analysing 17...a5 18.♖fe1 f4 I recommend 19.a4 (instead 19.♖ed1 a4 20.♘e1 g5 21.♔g2 might be a worthy alternative) 19...g5 20.♖ed1 when Black is doomed to a passive defence.

18.♘d2 e3 19.fxe3 e4

This seems to be the critical test.

20.♗xg7†

The tempting 20.♘xe4?! does not work in view of 20...♗h3! 21.♖f7 ♗xc3 22.♘xc3 ♖xe3 23.♖c1 ♖ae8 24.♔f2 ♖3e6 and Black's counterplay is enough for a draw.

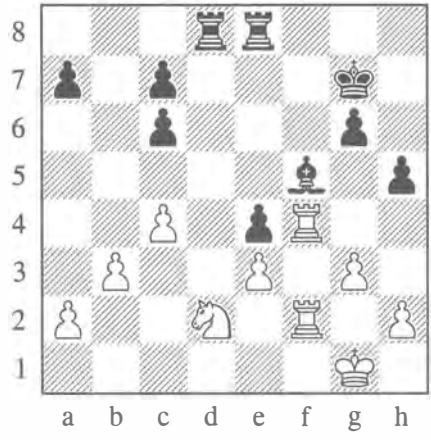
20...♔xg7 21.♖f4 ♗f5 22.♖af1

White's advantage is miserably small after 22.g4 ♖ad8 23.♘f1 ♗c8 24.♘g3 ♖d3 25.♖e1 ♖d2! 26.♖ef1 ♖e7 27.♖xe4 ♖xe4 28.♘xe4 ♖xa2 29.h3 ♖a3!.

22...♖ad8 23.♖1f2

White's intension is to play 24.g4. I do not see how Black can equalize here, as somehow White keeps an edge everywhere. For example:

23...h5



24.h3! ♖e5

Another line is 24...♗xh3 25.♖f7† ♔h6 26.♖xc7 ♖d3 27.♔h2 ♗g4 28.♘f1!± and one of the black pawns on the queenside will fall.

25.g4 hxg4 26.hxg4 ♗e6 27.♖xe4 ♖xe4 28.♘xe4 ♗xg4 29.♘c5 ♖e8 30.♖g2 ♗c8 31.♔f2 ♔f6 32.♔f3±

Despite the limited material, Black will suffer for the rest of the game, due to his damaged pawn structure.

Conclusion:

The lines covered in this chapter can be tricky for the unwary. White must watch out for transpositions to the Dutch that land outside our repertoire, so the lines given above should be a reliable guide.

More specifically, after 1.d4 g6 2.c4 f5 we can cause Black problems with 3.h4!. The other line is 1.d4 g6 2.c4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 f5 when the play is less dramatic – our usual kingside fianchetto leads to lines similar to our regular anti-Dutch lines. In both cases White should retain an edge.

Chapter 19

Grünfeld Defence



Dynamic Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5

5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3

A) 6...c5 298
B) 6...0–0 7.0–0 299
B1) 7...♘c6 300
B2) 7...c6 302
B3) 7...♘a6 8.♘c3 303
B31) 8...♘xc3 304
B32) 8...♗e6 304
B33) 8...♘b6 305
B34) 8...c5 306
B4) 7...c5 8.e4 308
B41) 8...♘b6 308
B42) 8...♘f6 9.e5 ♘d5 10.dxc5 311
C) 6... ♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3 315
C1) 8...e5 9.d5 315
C11) 9...♘e7 10.e4 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 c6 13.0–0 315
C12) 9...♘b4 10.e4 c6 11.a3 ♘a6 12.0–0 cxd5 13.♘xd5!?N 319
C121) 13...0–0 320
C13) 9...♘a5 10.0–0 0–0 11.e4 c6 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗e3 321
C2) 8...0–0 9.0–0 325
C21) 9...e5 326
C22) 9...a5 328
C23) 9...♖e8 10.♖e1!? 328

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5



This variation is more dynamic than the lines where Black plays ...c6 before pushing the d-pawn. If White continues his development with 5.♘f3, Black will take on c4, either immediately, or after both players castle. This is an absolutely respectable main line, however, I chose to confront the beast head on and follow the line leading to more thematic Grünfeld play.

5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3

My first intention was to recommend the 6.e4 line, but after serious investigation I came to the conclusion that Black is doing fine in the main variation beginning with 6.e4 ♘b6 7.♘e2 c5 8.d5 e6 9.0–0 0–0 10.♘bc3 ♘a6.

After the more restrained knight move, we come to the basic starting position of the present chapter. Black has several options: **A) 6...c5**, **B) 6...0–0** and **C) 6...♘b6**. The latter is widely considered to be the most accurate, for reasons that will be explained later.

I should mention that 6...♘c6 has little independent value after 7.♘c3, when 7...0–0 8.0–0 and 7...♘b6 8.e3 both lead to positions examined below. However, it is worth noting that 7.0–0?! would be a slight inaccuracy.



The point is revealed after 7...♘b6! 8.e3 e5 when Black has achieved a better version of the main line, which enables him to claim full equality.

A) 6...c5

It is important to be aware of some potentially significant differences between this line and 6...0–0 7.0–0 c5. The details will become apparent in due course.

7.e4 ♘f6

We should also pay attention to:

7...♘b6

This is likely to transpose to line B41 with 6...0–0 7.0–0 c5, after the almost inevitable short castling by both sides.

8.d5 e6 9.0–0 exd5

9...0–0 reaches line B41.

10.exd5



10...♕xd5?!

This is an independent line, but it is clearly misguided.

Even worse is 10...♘xd5? 11.♘g5! ♗d4 12.♕b3 when Black is in serious trouble.

Correct is 10...0–0, transposing to B41.

11.♖e1† ♗e6

11...♔f8 is no better. White plays 12.♕e2 ♕d8 13.♗g5 f6 14.♗f4 followed by ♘c3 and ♖ad1. It is hard to imagine Black surviving beyond the next ten moves.

12.♕xd5

The queen exchange does not diminish White's initiative in the slightest.

12...♘xd5 13.♘g5 0–0 14.♖xe6!

The strongest. 14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.♖xe6 is also enough for an advantage, but it is less substantial.

14...fxe6 15.♘xe6 ♖f5

The only move.

16.♘xg7 ♔xg7 17.♘c3

The point of White's combination.

17...♘xc3 18.♗xb7

White emerges with a healthy extra pawn and a technically winning endgame.

8.d5!

This strong move would be impossible in the analogous position with both sides having castled, as the pawn on e4 would be hanging, whereas here it is untouchable due to the queen check on a4. This small nuance allows White to achieve an optimal set-up.

8...♕a5†!?

Black understandably attempts to complicate matters. The standard 8...0–0 does not equalize after 9.♘c3 e6 10.0–0 (In Ujtelky – Paoli, Trencianske Teplice 1949, White misplaced his bishop with 10.♗e3?!, after which Black could have obtained a nice position with 10...exd5N 11.exd5 b6.) 10...exd5 11.exd5 ♖e8 At this point the game Jensen – Yssing, Denmark 1999, was prematurely agreed drawn, but after 12.♗f4N White has an improved version of the typical positions involving a passed d-pawn (compare, for example, line B41).



9.♘fd2!N

A very strong move that poses Black real problems. Black's idea was justified after 9.♗d2 ♕a6! 10.♘c3 0–0 11.♕c2 e6 with nice counterplay, Abel – Szigetvari, Gyongyos 1998.

9...♕a6

This is less effective in the present position, but Black's situation was already becoming difficult. 9...0–0 might be relatively best, although after 10.0–0 e6 11.♘c3 the queen is obviously misplaced on a5.

10.♗f1 ♕a5 11.♘c3 0–0 12.♘c4

White is clearly better, for instance:

12...♕a6 13.e5 ♘fd7 14.f4 ♘b6 15.♘e3 ♕a5 16.♗d2±

B) 6...0–0 7.0–0

Here Black's most popular choice is 7...♘b6, leading after 8.♘c3 ♘c6 to line C. Nevertheless the following alternatives all deserve attention: **B1) 7...♘c6, B2) 7...c6, B3) 7...♘a6** and **B4) 7...c5**.

B1) 7...♘c6



I recommend meeting this tricky move with:

8.♘c3

8.e4 ♘b6 9.d5 ♘a5 leads to a major theoretical variation, which in my opinion does not promise White any advantage.

8...♘xc3

8...♘b6 9.e3 transposes to line C.

The other option is 8...♗e6, when play continues 9.e4 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♗c4 11.♖e1. Here Black has two main moves:

a) 11...e5 is met strongly by 12.d5 ♘e7 (Black cannot play 12...♘a5 in view of 13.♗a3 ♖e8 14.♗b4! with a clear advantage.) 13.♘d2 ♗a6:



Now in Itkis – Pasarelu, Bucharest 1992, White continued with 14.c4, which is quite alright, but I would prefer not to allow Black the opportunity to regroup with 14...c5N followed by ...♘c8-d6.

Therefore I instead recommend 14.♗a3!N and only then following up with c3-c4. If Black stubbornly tries to prepare ...c5 with 14...b6, then it looks good to play 15.♕a4 ♗c8 16.♘c4 ♗d7 17.♕b3 when Black will find it hard to carry out ...c7-c5. Overall White has a nice edge after 14.♗a3.

b) 11...♘a5 12.♗f4!? c5 Van den Cruyce – Blok, e-mail 2006. Now I suggest:



13.♗e5!N f6 14.♗f4 White should be better with Black's dark-squared bishop at least temporarily blocked by its own team-mate.

9.bxc3 e5

This is quite a sound system for Black.

10.e3

Fortifying the d4-pawn is the most popular and best continuation. In case of an exchange on d4, White will almost always recapture with the c-pawn. Should this happen he will have the makings of a long-term positional advantage, based on his strong central foundation and pressure against Black's queenside.



10...♗e6

Black has two natural alternatives.

10...♖b8 is likely to transpose to the main line after 11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.♘d2 ♗e6.

10...♖e8

This is a flexible move, defending against the ♗a3 idea in advance.

11.♗a3

It is too early for White to relinquish the pressure on the e5-pawn.

For instance, I investigated the following line: 11.♘d2N ♘a5 12.♗a3 ♗e6 13.♕a4 c6, when Black has a pretty normal position. He relies on the variation: 14.♗b4 ♘c4 15.♘xc4 ♗xc4 16.♗a5 b5! 17.♕xc4 ♕xa5 18.♕b3 (also 18.♕xc6 ♖ac8 seems equal) 18...♖ac8 19.a4 exd4 20.cxd4 b4, with equality.

11...♗f5

After 11...♗e6 12.♘d2 we reach the main line.

12.♕b3 ♗d3?!

This is the wrong idea. Better was 12...♖b8, even though 13.♖fd1± maintains White's edge.

13.♖fd1 e4

We have been following the game S.B. Jensen – Lindinger, Hamburg 1999. Here White missed a very nice idea:



14.♖xd3!N exd3

14...exf3 is best met by 15.♗h1! (15.♗xf3 ♘e5 allows Black counterplay) 15...♘a5 16.♕d1, and the f3-pawn is falling.

15.♕xb7 ♕d7 16.♕a6

White also picks up the d3-pawn. With two pawns for the exchange plus a powerful pair of bishops, his advantage is undisputable.

11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.♘d2

Also quite interesting is the unexpected 12.♘xe5!?N. After the more or less forced sequence: 12...♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5 14.♗xb7 ♖b8 15.♗c6 ♗h3 16.♗xe8 ♕xe8 17.♕d5 ♗xc3 18.♖ac1 ♗xf1 19.♔xf1 White enjoys a small but stable plus.

12...♖b8 13.♕c2

This is the best square for the queen; it protects the a2-pawn and frees the queen's rook.

13...exd4

Black releases the tension in the centre in order to prepare ...♗d5, as the immediate 13...♗d5?? loses a piece to 14.e4.

14.cxd4 ♗d5 15.♖fd1

A good prophylactic move, preventing tactical ideas connected with a piece sacrifice on d4.

15...♗xg2 16.♔xg2 ♕d5†



17.♘f3 ♖bd8 18.♖ab1 ♖d7 19.♖dc1±

Thanks to the pressure on the queenside White achieved a pleasant advantage in Csom – Okhotnik, Hungary 2002.

It is important to mention that 19...♗xd4?! does not work: 20.♖d1 ♘e5 21.e4 ♕c6 22.♘xd4 ♖xd4 23.♕xc6 ♘xc6 24.♖xd4 ♘xd4 25.♖xb7 ♖xe4 26.♖xa7± and the endgame is very difficult for Black.

B2) 7...c6

This move is playable but rather passive. Black makes no attempt to fight for the centre, and White comfortably continues:

8.e4 ♘b6 9.h3!



It is important to prevent ...♗g4.

9...♘8d7

Another possible plan is:

9...♘a6 10.♘c3 ♗e6

Now I like the following idea:

11.a4!? h6

Black has also tried 11...♕d7, when the following encounter provides a good illustration of White's ideas: 12.a5 ♘c4?! (After 12...♘c8 13.♔h2 ♘d6 14.♗f4 ♖fd8 15.♖e1± White has the better chances, but this was the lesser evil for Black.) 13.e5! Suddenly Black's knight on c4 is in danger of being trapped in the middle of the board. 13...b6 (Obviously Black cannot play 13...♗xh3? in view of 14.b3 when the knight is lost.) 14.axb6 axb6 15.♘g5 White successfully develops his initiative. 15...♘c7 16.♖xa8♖xa8 17.♘xe6♘xe6 18.b3♘a5 Until now we have been following Mastrovasilis – Panagiotopoulos, Thessaloniki 2004. Here I found a strong improvement: 19.♗e3!N White is threatening 20.d5, and 19...♘c7 runs into 20.b4 ♘c4 21.b5±, when Black faces serious problems.



12.♘e2!N

This move is stronger than 12.a5 ♘c4 13.♕a4 ♕c8 14.b3 b5! 15.axb6 axb6 when White's misplaced queen enabled Black to count on a good game, Thorhallsson – Gretarsson, Iceland 1993.

Now I examined the following line:

12...♗c4

Otherwise ♘f4 might be annoying.

13.b3 ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 c5 15.a5 ♘d7 16.♖d1 ♖c8 17.e5!

White has a serious initiative.

10.♘c3 e5

Otherwise Black gets a very passive position without any real counterplay, for instance 10...♘f6 11.b3 h6 12.♗e3 when White has achieved his optimal set-up and keeps an obvious edge, Kursova – Bannikova, Novokuznetsk 2007.

11.♗g5



11...♕e8

The alternatives also fail to equalize:

11...f6 12.♗e3 ♕e7 has occurred three times. Here I suggest the improvement 13.♕b3†!N ♔h8 14.d5 cxd5 15.exd5 when the passed d-pawn secures White's advantage.

11...♕c7 12.♖c1

12.d5 is also promising.

12...exd4 13.♘b5!

The point of White's previous move.

13...♕b8 14.♘bxd4 ♘e5 15.♗f4 ♕d6?

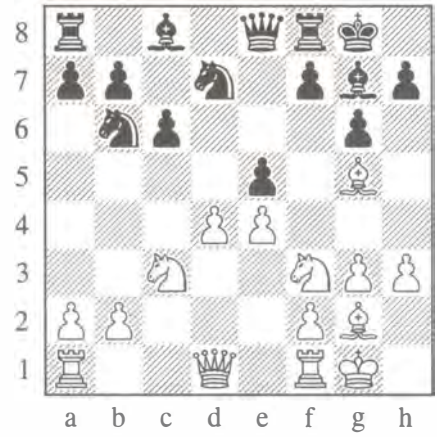
This tactical oversight occurred in Turova – Marinina, Samara 2003.

Certainly better was 15...♖e8, but White keeps a pleasant edge after 16.♕c2 ♕d6 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♗xe5 ♕xe5 19.♖cd1 followed by f4.

16.♘xc6!N

In the game White missed this simple tactic.

16...♕xd1 17.♘e7† ♔h8 18.♖fxd1 ♘xf3† 19.♗xf3 ♗xh3 20.♖c7±



In this position I found a new idea.

12.b3!?N

A good positional move, restricting the knight on b6.

The following line looks logical, but does not give much: 12.d5 h6! 13.♗e3 cxd5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♕xd5 ♘f6 16.♕xe5 ♘xe4 with equality, Baburin – Enders, Germany 2000.

12...exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c5 14.♖c1 ♗d7 15.♕d2 ♕e5 16.♗e3 ♖ad8 17.f4 ♕e7 18.♖fd1

White maintains a pleasant edge, thanks to his central superiority.

B3) 7...♘a6 8.♘c3

In my opinion this is the most promising direction for White. The popular alternative

is 8.e4 ♘b6 9.♘c3 ♗g4 10.d5, but Black is doing fine after 10...♕d7.



At this point we should look at **B31) 8...♘xc3**, **B32) 8...♗e6**, **B33) 8...♘b6** and **B34) 8...c5**.

B31) 8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 c5

The position resembles a normal Grünfeld, except that Black suffers from a misplaced knight on a6.

10.♖b1

White's pressure is deceptively strong. We will look at one principled reaction.

10...♕a5

This was played in Ptacek – Pataridis, Czech Republic 1996. Here I found an attractive new idea.

11.♗f4!?N

It turns out that White is under no obligation to defend his pawns. Instead he continues to combine development and centralization.

11...♕xa2

The other pawn is untouchable: 11...♕xc3? 12.♕a4! and there is no good defence against ♖fc1.

12.♕d3

White has fantastic compensation, for instance:

12...♕e6 13.d5 ♕d7 14.♘e5 ♕d8 15.♘c4!

Black's position is very passive.

B32) 8...♗e6

This has been played only once to my knowledge, but it seems quite interesting.

9.e4 ♘b6

This cannot be enough to equalize, since White is allowed to grab a lot of space.

9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♗c4 11.♖e1 c5 looks more logical. In this case White should continue with 12.♗f4, maintaining the better chances. Play might continue 12...♕a5 13.♘d2 ♗e6 14.d5 ♗d7 15.♖c1 with an edge.

10.d5 ♗d7

White is also better after 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3.



We have been following the game Meier – Mikhalchishin, Steinbrunn 2005. Now instead of 11.♕e2, I suggest the following continuation:

11.♗f4!?N c6 12.♗e5!

With a pleasant edge for White.

B33) 8...♘b6 9.♗f4

After 9.e4 ♗g4 we would reach a position mentioned in the note to White's 8th move above (8.e4 ♘b6 9.♘c3 ♗g4). As I said before, Black's chances are quite alright there, so White does better to avoid it.



9...c5

The alternative is:

9...c6

Such a passive strategy can hardly be enough for equality.

10.♕c1

A nice multi-purpose move. White not only intends to exchange the dark-squared bishop with ♗h6, but also vacates the d1-square for the rook.

10...f6

Black has also played 10...♖e8, but after 11.♖d1 ♗g4 12.♗h6 ♗f6 13.♘g5 intending h3 and e4 White has clearly better chances, Navarovszky – Malich, Budapest 1965.

11.♗h6 ♗e6 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.♖d1 ♕e8

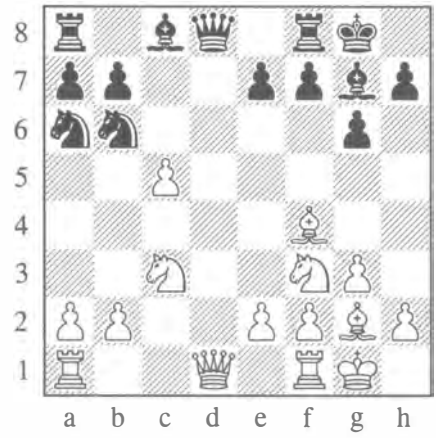
We have been following the game Boehlig – Nun, Warsaw 1978. At this point White should have played the natural:

14.e4! ♖d8 15.h3

White maintains the better chances thanks to his space advantage and central control.

10.dxc5

This is the right way to fight for an opening advantage. The following pawn sacrifice is very unclear: 10.d5 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♕xd5 12.♕c1 ♕h5!∞ Rodriguez Cespedes – Vilela de Acuna, St Spiritus 1989.



10...♘xc5

The queen exchange does not bring Black any relief:

10...♕xd1 11.♖fxd1 ♘xc5 12.♖ac1 ♘ca4

I also examined 12...♘e6 13.♗e5 f6 14.♗d4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♖d8 16.♘b3! and White keeps serious pressure.

13.♘xa4 ♘xa4

This was Toran Albero – De Carvalho, Montevideo 1954. Now strong would be:

14.♗e5!N f6

White is also clearly better after: 14...♘xb2 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♖d4! Cutting off the knight. 16...♗e6 (16...b5 17.♘e5 ♖b8 18.♖b1 ♘a4 19.♖xa4 ♗f5 20.♖ab4 ♗xb1 21.♖xb1±) 17.♘g5 ♖ac8 18.♖b1 ♘c4 Now White should avoid 19.♘xe6† fxe6 20.♖xb7 in view of the nice resource 20...♘e3! which almost equalizes. Instead the simple 19.♖xb7! gives a big advantage.

15.♗d4 e5 16.b3!

White is clearly better.

11.♕c1!

This enables White to make use of his better placed pieces.

Black is very close to equality after 11.♖c1 ♘e6 12.♗e5 ♕xd1 13.♖fxd1. here the draw was agreed in Stohl – Lputian, Rimavska Sobota 1991. Indeed after 13...♖d8 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 White's advantage is largely symbolic and Black has good chances to complete development.

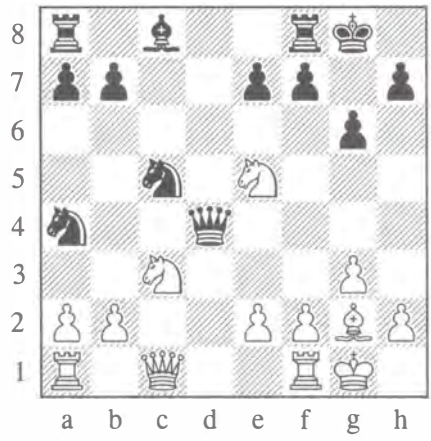
11...♘ba4

In Cvitan – Lehmann, Budapest 1990, Black instead preferred 11...♘ca4. Here White should played 12.♗e5!N and after 12...♗xe5 13.♘xe5 ♕d4 14.♘f3 ♕f6 15.♘xa4 ♘xa4 we reach the same position as after 11...♘ba4.

11...♗d7 was tried in Davies – P. Popovic, Vrsac 1989. Here I suggest the natural 12.♘e5!N ♖c8 13.♖d1 with annoying pressure.

12.♗e5 ♗xe5 13.♘xe5 ♕d4

This position was reached in Bolbochan – Malich, Varna 1962.



14.♘f3!?N ♕f6

Black should not remove his queen from the long diagonal. For instance, after 14...♕b4?! 15.♕h6! White obtains a strong attack. 15...♘e6 There is no other defence against the threat of ♘g5. 16.♘d5 ♕xb2 17.♘xe7† ♔h8 18.♕h4 ♘ac5 19.♖ad1 and White is much better.

15.♘xa4 ♘xa4 16.b3 ♘c3 17.♕e3 ♖d8

Less accurate would be 17...♘d5 18.♕d2 ♗e6 19.♘d4 with serious pressure.

18.♘e5 ♘d5 19.♕d4 ♗e6 20.f4

White has some pressure, thanks to his strong light-squared bishop, in a position that somewhat resembles a Catalan.

B34) 8...c5 9.♘xd5 ♕xd5 10.♗e3



10...♕h5

This is Black's relatively best reply, although his position remains problematic in any case.

10...♖d8?

This just loses a pawn.

11.dxc5 ♗e6

11...♗xb2 also does not help, since after 12.♕xd5 ♖xd5 13.♖ab1 ♗f6 14.♘d2 ♖d8 15.♖xb7! ♗xb7 16.♗xb7 White has a decisive advantage.

The text move was played in Williams – Littlewood, Brighton 1972. Now White could have obtained a winning position by means of:

12.♘d4 ♕c4 13.b3 ♕b4 14.a3 ♕c3 15.♖c1

♕b2 16.♗xb7 ♖ab8 17.♘xe6! ♖xd1 18.♖fxd1 fxe6 19.♗xa6

White is winning.

10...cxd4



11.♘xd4!N

This is much stronger than 11.♗xd4 ♖d8 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 when Black was close to equal in Gereben – Seret, Nice 1974.

After the superior text move, Black has a harder time neutralizing his opponent's initiative, as demonstrated by the following illustrative line:

11...♕d6 12.♘b5 ♕b4 13.a4! ♕xb2 14.♖b1 ♕e5 15.♕d5

White has strong pressure for a small material deficit. It seems to me that Black's position is highly problematic, for instance:

15...♗f5 16.♕xe5 ♗xe5 17.♗xb7 ♗xb1 18.♖xb1 ♘c7 19.♘xa7!

The a-pawn decides the issue.

11.♕b3

It looks like Black faces serious problems here and cannot hope for adequate play.

11...b6

The activation of his knight by 11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♘c5 looks natural, but fails to solve Black's problems after 13.♕a3 ♗f6 14.♖ac1 ♘d7 15.♖fd1 when White dominates, Paroulek – Svancer, corr. 1968.

12.♖ac1



12...♖b8?

Overlooking White's next move. Critical would have been 12...♗h3 but after the resolute 13.♕c4! White is firmly in control, due to the following line: 13...cxd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♗xd4 16.♘xd4 ♘c5 17.b4 ♘d7 18.♘c6 ♖fe8 19.♕d4! with a clear advantage thanks to the mighty knight.

13.♗f4! ♖b7

This was played in Porat – Mart, Netanya 1971. Now White missed a very strong opportunity.



14.♘g5!N h6

Black cannot play 14...♖d7, as after 15.♗f3 his queen is trapped.

15.♗f3 ♗g4 16.♗xb7 hxg5 17.♗e5

White's extra exchange should decide the game.

B4) 7...c5



8.e4

I decided to go with White's second choice according to theory. I did not find any advantage after 8.dxc5 ♘a6 9.♘g5 e6 10.♘e4 ♗d7! 11.♘bc3 ♗c6 which looks perfectly playable for Black.



We have reached another branching point. Here the main possibilities are **B41) 8...♘b6** and **B42) 8...♘f6**.

Besides these we also have:

8...♘b4

The knight seems to be misplaced here.

9.d5 e6

Black is not ready for complications, as happened in the following encounter: 9...c4 10.♘a3 f5 11.exf5 ♗xf5 12.♘d4! Black was already in trouble, and in the game his problems only worsened: 12...♗xd4?! 13.♕xd4 ♘8c6 14.♕xc4 ♗d3 15.♕b3 and White was winning, Kustar – Nogrady, Budapest 1993.

10.a3 ♘4a6 11.♘c3 exd5 12.exd5

The knight is obviously misplaced on a6.

12...♘d7 13.♗g5 ♘f6 14.♕d2 ♘c7 15.♖ad1 ♗d7 16.♖fe1 ♖e8

This was Matchett – May, Bognor Regis 1959. Now the natural

17.♘e5!?N

would secure White's clear edge.

B41) 8...♘b6 9.d5

Black has no problems after 9.dxc5 ♕xd1 10.♖xd1 ♘a4.

9...e6

In a few games Black has tried:

9...♗g4

However, relinquishing the bishop pair is unlikely to lead to equality.

10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘8d7 12.♕e2 c4

This was Smyslov – Simagin, Moscow 1961. Now White should have played:



13.♘a3!N

I examined the following line, which looks pretty natural to me:

13...♖c8 14.♖b1 ♘e5 15.♗e3 ♕d6 16.f4 ♘d3 17.♘xc4 ♘xc4 18.♕xd3 ♗xb2 19.♗f2

White's chances are preferable.

10.♘c3 exd5 11.exd5



At this point we should consider **B411) 11...♗f5** and **B412) 11...♘c4**. Other moves are possible, but less challenging in my view.

11...♘a6 12.♗g5!

This natural move is surprisingly annoying for Black.

12...♕d7 13.♖e1 f6

The threat of 14.♖e7 forces this undesirable move.

Presumably Black rejected 13...♖e8 on account of the simple 14.♖xe8† ♕xe8 15.♕d2 followed by ♖e1, when White seizes the initiative.

14.♗f4 ♖d8 15.d6

White was clearly better in Safin – Purushothaman, New Delhi 2007.

11...♗xc3

Obviously this is a risky decision.

12.bxc3 ♕xd5 13.♗h6 ♖e8

It would have been relatively best to exchange queens, although after 13...♕xd1 14.♖axd1 ♖e8 White nonetheless maintains clearly better chances with 15.♘g5 ♗g4 16.♖d6 ♘8d7 17.♗xb7.

14.♘d2! ♕d8 15.♘e4

By very simple means White develops a dangerous initiative.

15...♘c6 16.♗g5 ♕xd1 17.♘f6† ♔h8 18.♖axd1 ♖f8 19.♗h6±

Black is losing the exchange, Sakhatova – Levitina, Moscow 1983.

B411) 11...♗f5 12.♗g5 ♕d7 13.♖e1



13...f6

It can hardly be a good sign if Black has to make this move. I also examined the following attempt:

13...h6 14.♗e7!

Black is fine after 14.♗f4 g5! 15.♗e5 f6 16.♗xb8 ♖axb8.

14...♖c8 15.a4! ♘c4

Black faces serious problems after 15...♘a6 16.d6!. Now that Black's knight cannot jump to c6 this move is very strong. 16...♘b4 17.♘e5 ♕e6 18.f4!±

16.♕e2 ♘d6 17.♘b5!

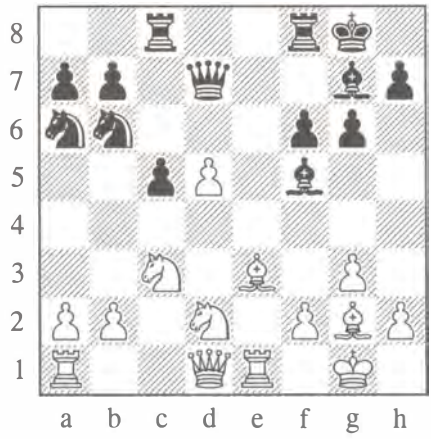
There is nothing special for White after 17.♗xd6 ♕xd6 18.♘e5 ♕xe5 19.♕xe5 ♗xe5 20.♖xe5 ♘d7 21.♖e7 ♖e8!.

17...♘xb5 18.axb5 c4 19.b6!

White has the initiative thanks to his strong passed pawn.

14.♗e3 ♘a6 15.♘d2 ♖ac8

This was Bocharov – Makarov, Krasnoyarsk 2007. Now I managed to improve White's play.



16.a4!N ♘b4

White is also clearly better after: 16...♖cd8 17.a5 ♘c8 18.♘de4!±

17.♘de4 ♗xe4 18.♘xe4 c4 19.♘c5 ♕f7 20.♘e6 ♖fe8 21.♗xb6! axb6 22.♗f1±

Once again Black has considerable problems.

B412) 11...♘c4



12.♖e1!?N

A previous game continued 12.♕b3, after which the natural 12...♘d6?! soon led to problems for Black: 13.♗g5 ♗f6 14.♗f4! ♘a6 15.♗xd6 ♕xd6 16.♘e4 ♕d8 17.♘xf6† ♕xf6 18.♖fe1 ♖b8 19.♘e5± N. Pert – D. Howell, Halifax 2004.

However, Black could have improved with 12...♘a5! since the natural 13.♕a4 only leads to an unclear game after 13...♗d7 14.♕f4 ♘a6 15.♗e3 h6 with complex play.

12...♘d7

This looks stronger than 12...♘a6 13.♗f1! ♘d6 14.♗g5 when White keeps the advantage, for instance: 14...♗f6 (14...♕b6 15.♘a4!±) 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♗xa6 bxa6 17.♘e5 White is better, thanks to his superior pawn structure.

13.♕e2 ♘d6 14.♗f4

Now 14.♗g5 can be met conveniently by 14...♘f6.

14...♖e8 15.♕d2 ♘f6



16.♖xe8† ♘fxe8 17.♖e1 ♗f5 18.h3

We have reached a complex middlegame position that requires practical testing. It seems to me that White's more active pieces enable him to claim some initiative at this stage.

B42) 8...♘f6

This is undoubtedly Black's main reply.



9.e5 ♘d5

9...♘fd7

This is not very popular, due to the following line:

10.e6! fxe6 11.♘g5 ♕b6

I also examined: 11...♘b6 12.♕e1 ♘c6 13.dxc5 ♘a4 14.♘xe6 ♗xe6† 15.♕xe6† ♔h8 16.♘c3 ♘xc5 17.♕e3± White maintains a pleasant edge thanks to his pair of bishops.

12.♕e2 ♘c6 13.♕xe6† ♔h8 14.♘f7† ♖xf7 15.♕xf7 cxd4 16.♖e1 ♘f6

This was played in Borovikov – Gutman, Senden 2005. Later on Black managed to get adequate compensation for the exchange, but only after White missed the following strong manoeuvre:



17.♘a3!N

The knight comes very effectively to c4, as shown in the following illustrative line:

17...♗f5 18.♘c4 ♕c5

18...♕a6 19.♗xc6 ♖f8 20.♕xe7 ♕xc6 21.♘e5 ♕d5 22.♗f4±

19.b4! ♕xb4 20.♗a3

White has a large advantage.

10.dxc5



Black's options here are **B421) 10...♘c6** and **B422) 10...♘b4**, in addition to the main line with **B423) 10...♘a6**.

B421) 10...♘c6 11.♘a3!

The best way to fight for the advantage.

11...♘db4

Black has also tried 11...♗g4 12.♕b3 ♖b8?!, Wade – Boxall, Chester 1952, and here the simple 13.♖d1 e6 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 would have given White a clear plus.

12.♕a4!?N

This is an important improvement, as White's results after other moves have not been too favourable. The idea of the text is very simple – White just wants to complete development and aim for a positional advantage. For the

time being he keeps an extra pawn, although he should not get too preoccupied with clinging to it.

12...♗g4

I also analysed 12...♘d3, which turns out to be inferior in view of: 13.♖d1 ♘xc5 14.♕c2 ♘d7 15.e6! (15.♗f4 also gives White slightly better chances, but the text is more ambitious.) 15...fxe6 16.♘g5 ♘d4 17.♕d3 Black is in trouble, for instance 17...♘b6 18.♘b5! e5 19.♘xd4 exd4 20.♕b3† e6 21.♘xe6 ♗xe6 22.♕xe6† ♔h8 23.♗f4± and White dominates the board with his bishop pair.

13.♖d1 ♕c8

13...♕e8 is met strongly with 14.♘b5!. Note that 14...♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xd1 does not solve Black's problems in view of: 16.♕xb4 ♗xe5 17.♗h6!±

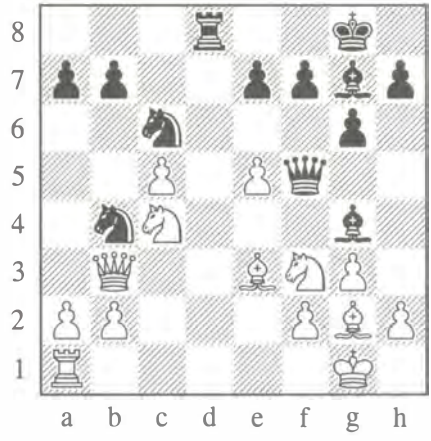
14.♘c4

Black has a pretty reliable position after 14.♗f4 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♗xe5 16.♗h6 ♗g7 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7.

14...♕e6 15.♕b3 ♖ad8 16.♗e3

Black certainly has some activity, but White has completed his development fairly harmoniously while retaining his extra pawn.

16...♕f5 17.♖xd8 ♖xd8



18.♘fd2±

Black has very little to show for the missing pawn.

B422) 10...♘b4 11.♘c3 ♘8c6 12.a3!?

It is also worth considering 12.♕a4.

12...♘d3 13.♗e3

White is ready to give up his extra pawn in order to secure a positional edge.

13...♗g4

I think the lesser evil for Black would have been to regain the pawn by means of 13...♘dxe5, although White maintains better chances after: 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♖c1 (15.♕b3 ♘d4 16.♗xd4 ♕xd4 looks pretty double-edged) 15...♕xd1 16.♖fxd1 ♗g4 17.♖d5! ♗g7 18.b4 a6 19.h3 ♗e6 20.♖d3± White has a slight but long-lasting advantage and Black is doomed to a passive defence.



14.♕b3!N

I believe this to be a serious improvement over 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘dxe5, as seen in Botvinnik – Bronstein, Moscow 1951.

14...♘dxe5

After 14...♕d7 15.♖fd1! the pin along d-file is extremely inconvenient for Black, for

instance 15..♖ad8 16.♘e1 ♗xd1 17.♖xd1 ♘cxe5 18.♘xd3 ♘xd3 19.♗e4 with a winning position.

15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.♕xb7 ♖b8 17.♕xa7 ♖xb2

No better is: 17...♘f3† 18.♔h1 ♖xb2 19.♖ad1 ♘d2 20.♖xd2 ♖xd2 21.♗xd2 ♕xd2 22.♘d5±



18.♘d5 ♖e8 19.♗g5!

Black fails to get adequate compensation for the pawn.

B423) 10...♘a6

This is the main line, and probably the most reliable move for Black.



11.a3

This is best. After 11.♕e2 ♘xc5 12.♖d1 b6! followed by ...♗a6 Black is doing fine.

11...♘xc5 12.b4 ♘e6

Clearly the main move. I found only one game with 12...♘a6, which is hardly surprising as the knight looks very passive here. 13.♗b2 ♘b6 14.♕e2 ♗e6 15.♖d1 ♕c7 16.♘bd2 ♕c2 17.♖ab1 ♗d5 18.♘d4 ♕a4 19.♘e4!± White has a much better position, thanks to his beautifully centralized pieces, Smejkal – Ribli, Leningrad 1977.

13.♕b3

This is the natural way of developing the initiative. The immediate threat is 14.♖d1.



13...♘b6

This has been Black's most popular reply by far. He can also try:

13...♘ec7 14.♖d1 ♗g4 (I think 14..♗e6 would have been better, although 15.♘g5! ♗xe5 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♖a2 gives White nice compensation for the pawn.) 15.♘c3 e6 16.♗b2 ♕b8 17.♘e4± Black faces serious difficulties, Mamedyarov – Nakamura, Lausanne 2005.

13...b6 14.♖d1 ♗b7 15.♘c3 ♘ec7 16.♗b2 ♕d7

This position occurred in Kotsur – Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2005. Here White should have played the natural:

17.♖d3!N

I analysed the following lines:

17...h6

Or 17...♖fd8 18.♖ad1 e6 19.♘g5 h6 20.♘ge4 with an advantage for White.

18.♖ad1 e6

Black cannot survive without this move.

19.♘e4 ♗c6 20.♖c1 ♗a4 21.♕a2 ♗b5 22.♖d2

White's chances are clearly preferable.

14.♖d1 ♕c7 15.♘c3 ♗d7

Too passive is 15...♘d8 16.♘b5 ♕b8. The game Bocharov – Nepomniachtchi, Tomsk 2006, continued 17.♗f4 ♗e6 and now White should have played 18.♕c2!N ♘c6 (18...♘d5 19.♘fd4 ♘xf4 20.gxf4 leads to a difficult position for Black due to the threat of ♘c7) 19.♘fd4 ♘xd4 20.♘xd4 ♗d5 21.♘f5 gxf5 22.♗xd5 e6 (or 22...♘xd5 23.♖xd5 e6 24.♖d6 with advantage) 23.♗g2 ♗xe5 24.♗xe5 ♕xe5 25.♗xb7 ♖ab8 26.♗c6 and White's chances are better.

16.♗e3 ♗c6

Clearly inferior is 16...♖fc8?! 17.♗xb6! axb6 18.♘d5 ♕d8 19.♕e3! and White maintains a clear positional superiority, Dmitriev – Efimov, Saratov 2009.



17.a4!

Only with energetic play can White fight for the advantage. It is also quite possible to reach this position via the move order 16.a4 ♗c6 17.♗e3.

Too slow is 17.♖ac1?! ♖ad8 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 and Black was doing fine, Martinovic – Wittmann, Budapest 2008.

17...♖fd8?

After this move Black encounters serious difficulties, so this looks like a prime moment to improve his play.

17...♗xe5

This seems like the obvious candidate.

18.♘xe5 ♕xe5

18...♗xg2? is not really an alternative, in view of 19.♘xf7!.

19.a5 ♗xg2 20.♔xg2 ♘c8

Other lines do not promise Black any relief either:

20...♖ac8 21.♖ac1 ♘c4 22.♗xa7 White is better in the long term, due to the possibility of creating a passed pawn on the queenside.

20...♖fc8 21.axb6 ♖xc3 22.♕d5 ♕xd5† 23.♖xd5 a6 24.b5! I doubt that Black can hold this endgame, due to the following variation: 24...a5 25.♖d7 ♖b8 26.♖xa5 ♔f8 27.♖a7 ♘d8 28.♗f4 ♖bc8 29.♖axb7 and White wins.

21.♖d5 ♕g7 22.♖ad1 ♘d6 23.♘b5 ♘xb5 24.♖xb5

White regains his pawn and maintains the better chances, for instance:

24...b6 25.axb6 axb6 26.♖xb6 ♖fd8 27.♖xd8† ♖xd8 28.♕c4

White's passed b-pawn is dangerous.

18.a5 ♘d7 19.♘d5! ♗xd5 20.♖xd5

Black is in trouble, as demonstrated by a couple of practical encounters.

20...♘xe5

Even worse is 20...♖ac8? 21.♗xa7! ♗h6 (Black cannot play 21...♘xe5 in view of 22.♘xe5 ♗xe5 23.♗b6+–) 22.♖ad1 with a decisive advantage, Bocharov – Nepomniachtchi, Tomsk 2006.

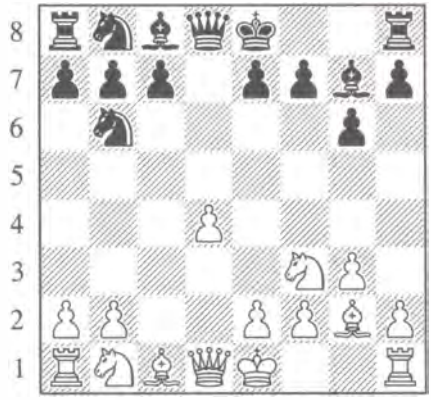
21.♘xe5 ♖xd5 22.♕xd5 ♖d8 23.♕xb7 ♕xe5

This was seen in Mamedyarov – Zhigalko, Heraklio 2002. Now the cleanest route to victory would have been:

24.♖f1!N +–

Not allowing Black any chances.

C) 6...♘b6



This is regarded by theoreticians as the main line. Black can also aim for the same position with 6...0–0 7.0–0 ♘b6 8.♘c3 ♘c6, but in that case White can consider 9.d5 as an alternative to the main line of 9.e3 (although I prefer the latter).

7.♘c3 ♘c6

This is the most popular move order for Black. Instead 7...0–0 8.0–0 transposes to the previous note.

8.e3

8.d5?! is not really an option, since Black has 8...♗xc3† 9.bxc3 ♕xd5. (This is not the case when both sides have castled, as instead of bxc3 White can capture on c6.)



This is the starting point for some of the most critical battlegrounds of the Fianchetto variation against the Grünfeld. Here we should look at **C1) 8...e5** and **C2) 8...0–0**.

C1) 8...e5 9.d5

Now Black has three possibilities: **C11) 9...♘e7**, **C12) 9...♘b4** and **C13) 9...♘a5**.

C11) 9...♘e7 10.e4 ♗g4

Developing the bishop while vacating the c8-square for the knight, in order to prepare ...c7-c6.

Premature would be:

10...c6?! 11.d6 ♘g8

This is too artificial and hardly playable for Black, as it allows White a lot of time to arrange his pieces in an optimal way.

12.b3 f6 13.0–0 ♘h6 14.♗a3 ♗e6 15.♕c2 0–0 16.♖ad1 ♖f7

Black cannot continue his regrouping by 16...♘f7 in view of 17.d7! winning the exchange.

17.♘e1!

A strong positional idea – the knight is heading for c5.

17...♘c8 18.♘a4!

Preventing Black from covering the outpost by means of ...b6.

18...♕e8 19.♘c5

White had a big advantage in Poliakov – Plischki, Marianske Lazne 2009.

10...0–0 11.0–0 will be examined in line C21, note to Black's 10th move.

11.h3

11.0–0 c6 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 is just a transposition.

11...♗xf3 12.♕xf3 c6

Black often plays:

12...0–0 13.0–0

Now 13...c6 would transpose to our main line. However, we should also consider:

13...♘c4

Transferring the knight to d6 is of course a thematic idea. Nevertheless, I do not believe that one well-placed piece can be enough to offset White's strong pawn centre and pair of bishops. We will look at one instructive example.

14.♕e2 ♘d6 15.h4!

White intends to activate his bishop via the h3-square. It is well worth remembering this strong positional motif.

15...f5 16.♗h3 c6 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.h5! f4 21.hxg6 ♖f6

This was Djuric – Z. Nikolic, Cetinje 1991. Now White could have obtained a big advantage with:

22.♗f5!N ♘xf5 23.exf5 ♖xf5 24.♕c4† ♔h8 25.♘e4

The difference between the knight on e4 and bishop on g7 is striking.

13.0–0

Compared with the previous note, it is useful for Black to exchange his potentially backward c-pawn for one half of the opponent's strong central duo. On the other hand, following the exchange on d5 the bishop on g2 will get a slightly better view of the board.



We will look at **C111) 13...cxd5** and **C112) 13...0–0**.

C111) 13...cxd5 14.exd5

I like this better than:

14.♘xd5 ♘bxd5

In Grischuk – Avrukh, Kemer 2007, I managed to mix up the move order and captured with the wrong knight. My position soon became unpleasant after 14...♘exd5?! 15.exd5 ♕d6 16.♕b3 0–0 17.♗d2 ♖fc8 18.♗b4 ♕d7 19.d6.

15.exd5

15.♖d1 0–0 16.exd5 is considered in the note to White's 15th move in line C112, page 318.

15...♘f5

Black has a reliable position, N. Pert – Zhigalko, Turin 2006.

14...♘f5 15.d6!

This aggressive continuation is the only way to fight for the advantage. Black has nothing to fear after other moves, for instance: 15.b3 0–0 16.♗a3 ♘d4 17.♕d3 ♖e8 18.♖ac1 ♘c8! Both

of Black's knights have found nice squares, and he has a full share of the chances, Bocharov – Roiz, Sochi 2007.

15...♖b8

It looks much too risky for Black to grab the pawn:

15...♘xd6?! 16.♖d1 ♕e7

16...♕c7 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♕xd5 ♖d8 19.♗g5 f6 20.♗e3±

17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♕xd5 0–0–0

18...♖d8 does not help after 19.♗e3 (threatening ♗c5). 19...b6 20.♗d2! (planning ♗b4) 20...a5 21.♗e3! The bishop's dance has provoked some major weaknesses, resulting in serious problems for the defence.

19.♕a5 ♔b8 20.♗e3 ♘c8 21.♖dc1!

It is hard to believe Black can hold this position.

16.♖d1 0–0



17.♕d3!

This strong, concrete approach was first introduced by Van Wely. Before this game White had tried 17.♗e3, but after 17...♘d4 18.♗xd4 exd4 19.♘b5 ♘c4 Black holds his own.

17...♘d4 18.♘b5 ♕d7

This was recommended by Ftacnik in *Chess-Base Magazine 81* as a possible improvement over the game, which continued:

18...♘d7 19.♘xd4 exd4 20.♗d2 ♖e8

Somewhat stronger was 20...♘e5 although after 21.♕b3 ♖e8 22.♗b4 White maintains a stable edge.

21.♖ac1 ♕f6 22.♗b4 ♘e5 23.♕xd4!

This elegant exchange sacrifice quickly decides the game.

23...♘f3† 24.♗xf3 ♕xd4 25.♖xd4 ♗xd4 26.d7 ♖ed8 27.♗d6

White won easily in Van Wely – Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

19.♘xd4 exd4 20.♗f4

Ftacnik gives the following line, which seems pretty logical to me as well:

20...♘c8 21.♕a3 ♖d8 22.♖e1! b5 23.♖ac1 b4

Here I found a significant improvement.



24.♕a6!

This brings White a substantial advantage. Ftacnik only considered 24.♕b3.

24...♘xd6

24...♖b6 meets with the powerful rebuttal 25.♖c7!.

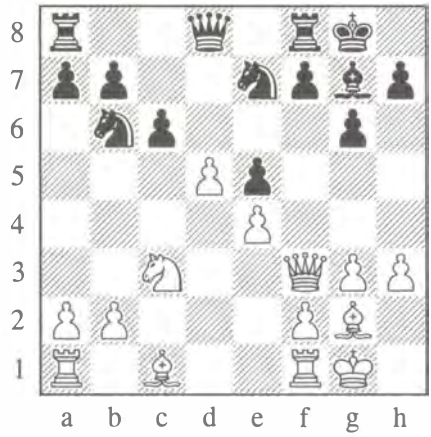
25.♖c6 ♗f8

No better is 25...♖b6 26.♖xb6 axb6 27.♕xb6 when the b4-pawn is falling.

26.♖d1

Black is under serious pressure. White's pieces are tremendously active, especially his bishops.

C112) 13...0–0



14.♖d1 cxd5 15.exd5

Some strong players have taken with the knight, but my own preference is to go with the pawn. In principle, it should be helpful for White to keep his remaining knight on the board, as it adds a 'non-linear' dimension to the collective abilities of his pieces. Black, on the other hand, can obviously afford to trade one pair of knights without losing that ability.

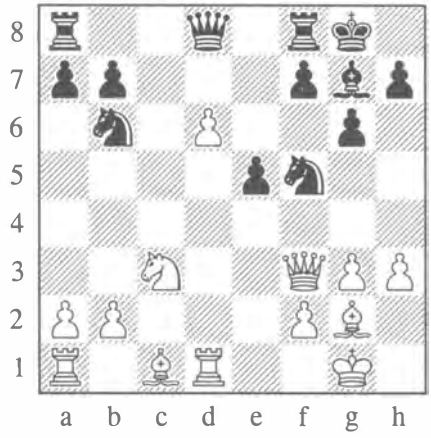
Thus 15.♘xd5 ♘bxd5 16.exd5 ♕d6 should be acceptable for Black, who plans to activate his remaining knight by means of ...♘f5-d4.

15...♘f5

Black would love to install one knight on d4 and the second on d6, but of course White has no intention of allowing this.

16.d6!

We have already encountered this thematic idea in previous lines. It is important for White to increase the influence of his light-squared bishop.



16...♘d4

If 16...♖b8 17.♕d3 we reach the well-known game Van Wely – Leko, as examined in Line C111 starting on page 316.

16...♘xd6? is easily refuted by 17.♘e4 ♘bc4 18.♘xd6 ♘xd6 19.♕a3 winning.

17.♕xb7 ♕xd6

This is perhaps the critical position of the whole line. Both sides have achieved certain things. Black has eliminated his opponent's passed pawn, and has secured an ideal central outpost for one of his knights. Nevertheless White's pair of bishops is a valuable long-term asset, and this should enable him to obtain the better chances if he plays precisely.

18.♗g5!

White strives to make the best possible use of his bishops.

18...♕e6

The threat was 19.♗e7.

19.♖ac1 h6

Driving the bishop away from the h4-d8 diagonal, in order to obtain the d8-square for the rooks.

Clearly premature would be 19...f5? in view of 20.♘d5! ♘e2† (20...e4 loses on the spot in view of 21.♖c7 ♗e5 22.♖e7! ♕d6 23.♗h6 with a decisive attack.) 21.♔h2 ♘xc1 22.♘c7 ♕f7 23.♘xa8 ♕xb7 24.♗xb7 ♘xa8 25.♗d5† ♔h8 26.♖xc1 ♘b6 27.♗e6± and White is clearly better, thanks to his bishop pair.

20.♗e3 ♖fd8 21.♕a6 ♖ac8 22.b3!

It is essential to cover the c4-square in order to keep the b6-knight restricted.

22...♖c7 23.♔h2

Another prophylactic move, preparing ♘b5.

23...♖dc8 24.♘b5 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♖xc1 26.♗xc1 ♕c8 27.♕xc8† ♘xc8 28.♗f1

We have been following Martyn – Jo. Hodgson, Birmingham 2006. The resulting endgame is highly unpleasant for Black, thanks to White's bishop pair and possibility to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

C12) 9...♘b4



10.e4 c6 11.a3 ♘a6 12.0–0

One of the main points of Black's idea can be seen in the following line: 12.dxc6 ♕xd1† 13.♘xd1 ♘c5! and Black obtains a fully acceptable game. I tried to improve upon previous games with 14.b4!?N, but eventually concluded that after 14...♘d3† 15.♔e2 ♘xc1† 16.♖xc1 bxc6 17.♖xc6 ♗a6† 18.♔e1 0–0 19.♘d2 ♗h6 Black has very nice compensation.

12...cxd5

Black has also tried:

12...0–0



Now it looks promising for White to play:

13.dxc6!N

Getting a favourable pawn structure.

13...bxc6

If 13...♕xd1 14.♖xd1 bxc6, then White can play 15.b4 ♖e8 16.♗f1 ♘c7 17.h3! intending ♗e3, maintaining a pleasant advantage.

14.♕c2 ♗e6 15.♗e3

Also worthy of consideration is 15.b4!?.

15...♘c4 16.♖fe1

I think White has a stable edge, for instance:

16...♘xe3 17.♖xe3 ♘c5

Otherwise White will continue with ♘a4.

18.♘d1 ♕b6 19.b4 ♘b7 20.♖c3

With definite pressure.

13.♘xd5!?N

This is an interesting novelty. Up to now White has only tried 13.exd5 but without much success. Now I have analysed **C121) 13...0–0** and **C122) 13...♘xd5**.



C121) 13...0–0 14.♗e3

14.♗g5 seems less convincing to me due to 14...f6 15.♗e3 ♘xd5 16.exd5 e4! 17.♘d2 f5.

14...♘c4

14...♘xd5 15.exd5 transposes to line C122 with 13...♘xd5.

15.♗g5 f6 16.♖c1!

This is the tactical justification for White's previous play.

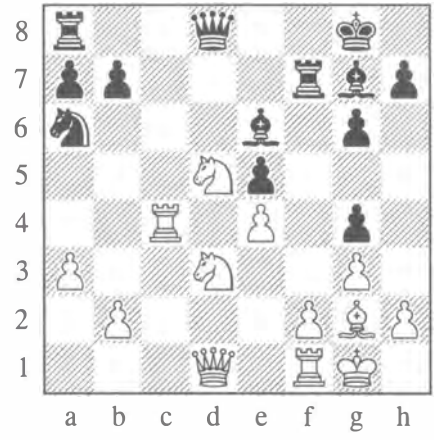
16...fxg5

Other possibilities are no better.

16...b5 17.♗e3 ♗e6 (clearly inferior is 17...♘xe3? 18.♘xe3 ♕xd1 19.♖fxd1 ♗b7 20.♘d5 with the unpleasant threat of 21.♗f1) 18.♕b3 ♕d7 19.♖fd1 ♘xe3, and now both 20.♘xe3 ♗xb3 21.♖xd7 and 20.♕xe3 ♕b7 21.♘d2 ♖ac8 22.♘b3 followed by ♘a5 promise White a stable edge.

16...♘xb2 17.♘xf6†! ♕xf6! (this is stronger than 17...♗xf6 18.♕b3† ♔g7 19.♗xf6† ♕xf6 20.♕xb2 ♖e8 21.♖fd1±) 18.♕b3† ♕e6 19.♕xb2 b6 20.♗e3! White enjoys a pleasant edge, thanks to his better pawn structure.

17.♖xc4 g4 18.♘e1 ♗e6 19.♘d3 ♖f7



20.♕b3 ♖c8 21.♖xc8 ♕xc8 22.♖c1 ♕f8 23.♕a4

White maintains some pressure.

C122) 13...♘xd5 14.exd5 0–0 15.♗e3!



The dark-squared bishop really feels at home on this square. This position requires serious investigation, but seems promising for White.

15...h6

White is also better after the alternatives:

15...f5?! looks premature in view of 16.d6! ♔h8 17.♕d2 and the d6-pawn is very strong.

15...♘c7 16.d6 ♘e8 17.♖c1! (Black obtains fair compensation for the exchange after the

premature 17.d7 ♗xd7 18.♗c5 e4) 17...♗f5 18.d7 ♗xd7 19.♗c5 e4 20.♘d4 It is hard for me to believe Black will get sufficient compensation for the exchange.

16.♖c1 e4 17.♘d2 f5 18.♕b3!

White has the better chances.

C13) 9...♘a5 10.0–0

10.e4 is likely to lead to the same position.

10...0–0 11.e4 c6



This position has been reached quite often via the move order 8...0–0 9.0–0 e5 10.d5 ♘a5 11.e4. Black's set-up used to be quite popular in the 1980s and 1990s, but eventually faded out of fashion at higher levels, due to the following line:

12.♗g5! f6

The alternatives are also less than inspiring for Black:

12...♕d7 It is hard to believe this can be the right square for Black's queen. 13.♖c1 (a nice alternative was the thematic 13.b3!?N) 13...h6 14.♗e3 ♖d8 Szmetan – Barreras, Cienfuegos 1976. Now the simple 15.♘a4!N ♘ac4 16.♘xb6 ♘xb6 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♕xd7 ♗xd7 19.b3 would have given White a pleasant advantage.

12...♕d6 13.b3!

Taking control over the crucial c4-square.

13...h6

Relatively best would have been 13...cxd5 14.exd5 f5, although White still maintains an edge after 15.♕d2 ♗d7 16.♖ac1.

14.♗e3 cxd5 15.exd5 ♖d8 16.♕e1! e4

16...♗d7 does not help after: 17.♘e4 ♕xd5 18.♗xh6! ♘c6 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♖d1 ♘d4 21.♘eg5!±

17.♘xe4 ♕xd5 18.♗xh6!

The point.

18...♗f5 19.♗xg7 ♗xe4 20.♗b2

White has a winning position, Harikrishna – Sivanandan, Mumbai 2003.

13.♗e3



In this topical position Black used to take on d5 automatically, but more recently a second option was introduced in Grandmaster praxis. Thus we will analyse the newer **C131) 13...♘bc4** along with the more established **C132) 13...cxd5**.

C131) 13...♘bc4

This fresh idea was tested by the talented

Indian Grandmaster Negi at the Politiken Cup in 2009, although it had first been played in a couple of obscure e-mail games five years previously.

14.♗c5!

The game Brynell – Negi, Politiken Cup 2009, continued 14.♗c1 c5, and Black soon obtained a comfortable game after 15.♘e1 ♘d6 16.f4 f5 17.♘f3 ♘ac4. The text seems like a definite improvement to me.

14...♖f7 15.b4!?N

I believe this to be the critical test of Black's idea.

The stem game continued 15.dxc6 ♘xc6 16.♕e2 ♗e6 when White had no more than a tiny advantage, Bochev – Benovic, Internet 2004.

Another possibility is 15.b3 b6 16.♗b4 c5 17.♗xa5 ♘xa5 with a very complicated game. In general, it is hard for White to achieve anything special by simple means.

15...b6



16.♗e3!

16.bxa5 bxc5 17.dxc6 ♗e6 looks fine for Black.

16...♘xe3 17.fxe3 ♘c4 18.dxc6 ♕e8

White also keeps the better chances after 18...♗e6 19.♖e1 b5 20.a4!.

19.♘d5

The exchange sacrifice 19.b5 ♘xe3 20.♕a4 ♘xf1 21.♗xf1 looks playable, but I doubt it can suffice for more than equality.

19...♕xc6 20.♖c1 b5

I also analysed 20...♗g4 21.a4 a6 (The main point is that after 21...b5 22.axb5 ♕xb5 White has the incredibly strong 23.♖f2! threatening ♗f1. It looks like Black unavoidably loses material, for instance 23...♘d6 24.♘c7 winning the exchange.) 22.♕d3 b5 23.♘d2 ♖c8 24.♖c2! followed by ♖fc1 winning a pawn.

21.♘d2 ♗d7 22.♘xc4 bxc4



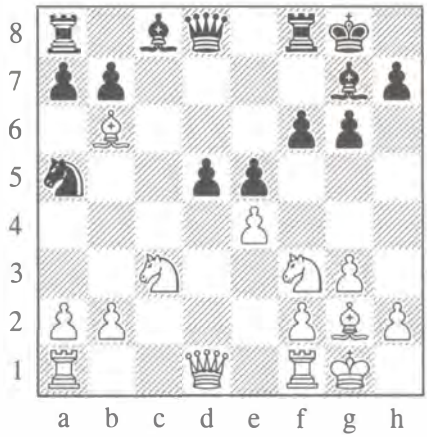
23.♖f2!

White not only intends to double his rooks along the c-file, but also vacates the f1-square for the bishop.

23...♖c8 24.♗f1 ♕a6 25.♖c3!

There is no way Black can hold on to the c4-pawn. White can increase the pressure with ♕c1 and ♖fc2 if needed.

C132) 13...cxd5 14.♗xb6!



The exclamation mark is largely for the psychological aspect of this move. Usually when choosing this line Black hopes for a complicated battle, such as that which arises after 14.exd5 ♘ac4. Instead after the text move White gets an almost risk-free middlegame position with a slight pull. In general this is quite an unpleasant strategy for the type of player who opts for such an "active opening" as the Grünfeld.

Black can recapture with the pawn, **C1321) 14...axb6**, and the queen, **C1322) 14...♕xb6**.

C1321) 14...axb6

This is not without merit, but ultimately I believe the vulnerability of Black's queenside pawns to be the most important factor.

15.♕xd5† ♔h8

I believe this to be a better try than:

15...♕xd5 16.♘xd5 ♘c4

Black has also tried 16...♗g4 17.♘xb6 ♖a6 18.♘d5 ♘c4 but this is refuted by the attractive 19.♖fc1! ♘xb2 20.♖ab1 ♖a3 (I also examined 20...♖xa2, but it does not help much. 21.♖c2 ♖a3 22.♖cxb2 ♗xf3 23.♗xf3 ♖xf3 24.♖xb7 Black's position is hardly acceptable, since he can do nothing about White's idea to penetrate along the seventh rank with his rooks.) 21.♖xb2 ♗xf3 22.♗xf3 ♖xf3 23.♖xb7 with a winning position, Ross – Savereide, Saint John 1988.

17.b3 ♘d6

Now I discovered a nice improvement:



18.♖fd1!N

18.♘xb6 ♖a6 19.♘xc8 ♖xc8 20.♖fd1 ♘xe4 21.♘xe5 f5 22.f4 ♗xe5 23.fxe5 ♖c2 and Black has reasonable drawing chances, Sriram – Rodriguez Lopez, Pontevedra 2008.

18...♘xe4 19.♘xe5 fxe5

Now 19...f5 meets with a stylish refutation: 20.♘e7† ♔h8 21.♖d8! ♗xe5 22.♖xf8† ♔g7 23.♖g8† ♔f7 24.♖c1+–

20.♗xe4 ♗g4 21.♖d2

White has a clear positional advantage.

16.♖fd1 ♕e7 17.♕b5 ♕c5 18.♖d5 ♕c6

Exchanging queens is inadvisable for Black, as in this case he loses the b6-pawn: 18...♕xb5 19.♖xb5 ♗d7 (19...♖a6 20.♘d5!) 20.♖xb6 ♗c6 21.♗f1± Quinteros – L. Bronstein, Sao Paulo 1977.



19.♕b4!N

This move is obviously better than the inaccurate 19.♖ad1?!, which allowed Black to equalize after 19...♗e6 20.♖d6 ♕xb5 21.♘xb5 ♗xa2 Kristiansen – Heggheim, Oslo 1978.

19...♗e6 20.♖d6 ♕c8 21.♘d5 ♗xd5 22.♖xd5 ♕c7 23.♖ad1 ♖fd8 24.♕c3! ♘c6 25.a3

White enjoys a small but stable edge.

C1322) 14...♕xb6 15.♘xd5



15...♕d8

Black must certainly avoid 15...♕xb2?? 16.♘c7 ♖b8 17.♕d5† winning the knight on a5.

15...♕d6

This is not a stable square for Black's queen.

16.♖c1 ♘c6

Black is certainly not ready for activity such as 16...f5? 17.♖c7 ♔h8 18.♘g5 ♗e6



19.♖xg7! ♔xg7 20.♘c7 and White wins, Brunello – D. Andersen, Helsingor 2008.

17.♕b3 ♖f7?

An unfortunate idea. Better was the modest 17...♔h8 although after 18.♖fd1± Black has a slightly worse version of the position with the queen on d8.

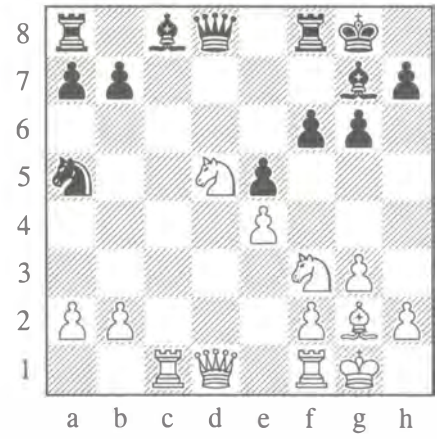
18.♖fd1 ♕f8

With the queen on d6, 18...♗e6?? loses to 19.♘xf6†.

19.♘c7!

This was Ryzhkov – Ovchinnikov, Tula 2004. White is already winning, as 19...♖b8? would allow 20.♖xc6.

16.♖c1



16...♘c6

Other options are clearly worse:

16...♗g4 17.♖c7! ♖f7? A mistake, but White is better anyway. 18.♖xf7 ♔xf7 19.♘xe5†! fxe5 20.♕xg4 and White is a pawn up for nothing, Cvitan – Sanchez Almeyra, Biel 1992.

16...♖f7 17.b4 ♘c6 18.b5! ♘a5 19.♘c7!

A very concrete and strong approach.

19...♖d7

The main point of White's idea can be seen in the following line: 19...♕xd1 20.♖fxd1 ♖b8 21.♖d8† ♖f8 22.♘e8! and White wins material.

20.♘xa8 ♖xd1 21.♖fxd1 ♕f8 22.♘c7±

White's two rooks are clearly stronger than Black's queen, Tatenhorst – Zylla, Germany 1993.

17.♕b3

This natural move is considered best by theory.

17...♖f7

This is the main reply. Black has also tried:

17...♔h8 18.♖fd1 f5

To me this looks rather dubious.

19.♘b4! ♕f6

This was N. Pert – Bu Xiangzhi, Liverpool 2007. Now instead of settling for the draw by 20.♘d5 White could have achieved an advantage by simple means:

20.♘xc6!N fxe4

20...bxc6 is strongly met by 21.♕e3 f4 (even worse is 21...fxe4?! 22.♘d2!) 22.♕c5 ♗g4 23.♖d6 and Black is going to suffer.

21.♘cxe5 exf3 22.♘xf3 ♗g4 23.♖c3!

White keeps an extra pawn. Certainly Black has some chances for the draw thanks to the possibility of defending with opposite-coloured bishops, but I doubt that many players would consider this a satisfactory outcome from the opening for Black.

18.♖fd1 ♗e6 19.♗f1!

Despite being played only twice the text seems to me the most natural continuation. One of White's main strategic ideas is to exchange light-squared bishops, leaving White's central knight against Black's dark bishop.

19...♔h8

I also examined 19...♖d7 20.♗b5 ♖c8 21.♕a4 ♖d6 which appears pretty solid for Black. Nevertheless White obtains a comfortable edge through an elegant tactical combination: 22.♗c4 ♔h8 23.♘b6! ♖xd1† 24.♖xd1 ♕xb6 25.♗xe6 ♖d8 26.♖xd8† ♕xd8 27.♗d5±



20.♗b5!N

20.♕a4 has been played in a couple of games, but the text is a natural improvement.

20...♖b8 21.♕a4

White's initiative is not easy to contain. For example, 21...♖d7 is met strongly by 22.♘b4!.

C2) 8...0–0 9.0–0



At this junction we should pay close attention to the following moves: **C21) 9...e5**, **C22) 9...a5** and **C23) 9...♖e8**.

We should also consider a couple of less serious alternatives.

9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3

Exchanging the black light-squared bishop for White's knight cannot be a good idea.

11...e5 12.dxe5!

This is easier than 12.d5 ♘e7 13.e4, which leads to a position examined in line C11.

12...♗xe5 13.♕e2 ♕e7

This far we have been following Navarovszky – Kirov, Polanica Zdroj 1976. Now White could have played the following natural moves:



14.♗d2!?N ♖fd8 15.♖fd1 ♗g7 16.♗e1±

With a pleasant edge.

9...♗e6 10.b3 ♕c8 11.♗b2 ♗h3

The exchange of the light-squared bishops costs Black some time and does not lead to equality.

12.♖c1 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♖d8 14.♕e2 e5 15.dxe5 ♘xe5

Kharitonov – Zaichik, Vilnius 1978. Once again we have a natural improvement.



16.♘e4!N ♘xf3

An important point is that 16...♘d3 allows White to seize a dangerous initiative with 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♖fd1! ♘xc1 19.♕b2† ♔f8 20.♕h8† ♔e7 21.♕f6† ♔e8 22.♖xc1.

16...♕f5 can be met comfortably with 17.♗xe5! ♗xe5 18.♘c5 ♖ab8 19.e4, with an obvious positional superiority – just look at the difference between the knights.

17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕xf3 ♘d5 19.♖fd1 c6 20.♘c5

White has definite pressure, with e3-e4 to follow shortly.

C21) 9...e5 10.d5



10...e4

This used to be considered fully reliable for Black, up until the Tkachiev – Sutovsky game featured in the main line below.

After 10...♘a5 11.e4 we reach a position that was examined in line C13.

The other serious option is:

10...♘e7 11.e4 ♘c4

This knight manoeuvre is thematic, but costs Black some time.

After 11...♗g4 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3 c6 14.♖d1 we once again reach a position from the 8...e5 variation, this time line C11.

12.b3 ♘d6 13.♗a3

This is the most purposeful square for the bishop. White has a promising position, as shown by the following lines.

13...h6

Premature would be 13...f5?! in view of the thematic 14.♘g5! f4 15.♘e6 ♗xe6 16.dxe6 ♘c6 17.♘d5 with a big advantage for White, Stohl – L. Horvath, Germany 2005.

14.♖c1 f5

This occurred in Krant – Shure, New York 1992. Here I found a nice improvement:



15.♖e1!N

Targeting the e5-pawn.

15...f4

This looks like the natural response.

16.♘a4!

White obtains a strong initiative on the queenside. His ideas include ♕c2 attacking the c7-pawn, or ♘c5-e6.

11.dxc6 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 exf3 13.♗xf3 bxc6



14.♗d2!

Tournament practice has demonstrated that Black has full compensation for the pawn after 14.♗xc6 ♖b8. Instead White should concentrate on development, with a view to exploiting his superior structure later in the game.

14...♘c4 15.♘a4! ♖b8

15...♘xb2?? would be a decisive mistake in view of: 16.♘xb2 ♗xb2 17.♖ab1 ♖b8 18.♗c1+–

Black has also tried:

15...♗f5 16.♖ac1 ♘e5 17.♗e2 ♗e4

This looks tricky, but White can keep the advantage with precise play.

18.♗a5 ♘f3†

This was Blecken – Von Alvensleben, Germany 1996. Here White should not be afraid of Black's threats and instead react calmly.



19.♔g2!N

The discovered checks achieve very little. Here is a sample line:

19...♘e1† 20.♔f1 ♘f3 21.♘c5 ♘xh2† 22.♔g1 ♘f3† 23.♔g2! ♘h4† 24.♔h3 ♗f3 25.♗xf3 ♘xf3 26.♔g2 ♘e5 27.♗xc7±

White is clearly better, due to Black's weak pawns on the queenside.

16.♗c3 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♘e5 18.♗e2!

Another accurate move. Instead if 18.♗g2 Black has 18...♖b5! intending ...♖a5 with decent counterplay.

18...♗e6 19.♖d4!

White has coordinated his pieces in an optimal way, preventing all counterplay.

19...♘d7 20.♖ad1 ♘b6 21.♘c5

Black faces a depressing endgame, Tkachiev – Sutovsky, Dresden 2007.

C22) 9...a5 10.b3



10...e5

Other options:

10...a4?! is premature. 11.♘xa4 ♘xa4 12.bxa4 ♗e6 (12...♗f5, Covic – Plakalovic, Jahorina 2003, can be met simply by 13.♘h4N ♗d7 14.♖b1±) 13.♖b1 ♖a7 14.♕c2 ♕a8 15.♘h4! Black fails to obtain sufficient compensation for the pawn.

10...♗g4 was played in Gorelov – Tseshkovsky, Minsk 1985. Here I suggest the following line for White: 11.h3N ♗e6 12.♗a3 ♘d5 13.♘a4 ♘db4 14.♕e2± and White is slightly better.

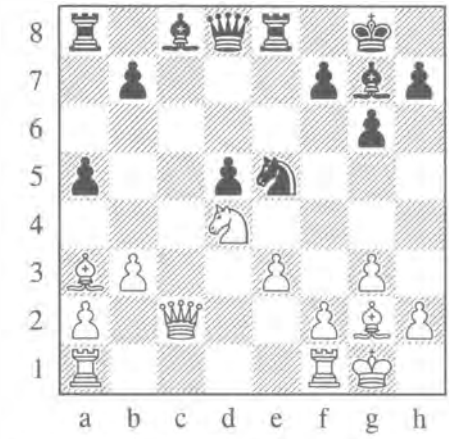
10...♗f5 11.♗b2 ♕d7 12.♘g5!? Not only preventing ...♗h3, but also embarking on a journey towards the c5-square. 12...♖fd8 13.♘ge4 e5 14.♘c5 ♕c8 15.d5 e4 This was Korchnoi – Olafsson, Stockholm 1962, and now White should have continued 16.♕e2N ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♖xd5 18.♘xe4 ♗xb2 19.♕xb2 ♗xe4 20.♗xe4 ♖d6 21.♖fd1± with a pleasant edge.

11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘d4

This is more ambitious than 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.♖c1 with just a slight edge.

13...c6 14.♕c2 ♘d5 15.♘xd5 cxd5

We have been following the game Sokolsky – Arulaid, Moscow 1959. Now I suggest:



16.♗b2N ♗e6 17.♖ac1 ♖c8 18.♕d2±

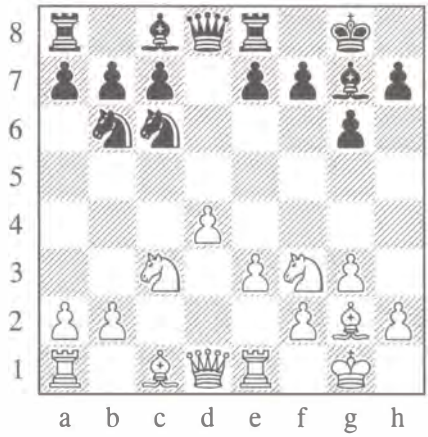
White has a pleasant position with convenient play against the isolated pawn.

C23) 9...♖e8

This is the most fashionable line nowadays.

10.♖e1!?

This continuation used to be considered harmless for Black, but after the game Tkachiev – Iordacescu, Dresden 2007, it returned to fashion. The rook move is useful preparation for the central confrontation that usually takes place within a few moves.



At this point we should look at **C231) 10...h6!?**, **C232) 10...♗d7**, **C233) 10...a5!?** and finally the main line of **C234) 10...e5**.

C231) 10...h6!?

Rather a curious waiting move. Black is waiting for his opponent to reveal his intentions before committing himself to a definite plan. The text might be useful in preparing to develop the bishop on e6 without fear of harassment from a knight on g5.

11.h3!?

White responds in a similar manner. The premature 11.b3 is exactly the move Black was waiting for. After 11...e5 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.♗b2 ♕xd1 15.♖axd1 c6 Black equalized comfortably in Prakken – Okhotnik, Nancy 2004.

11...a5 12.♕e2

The same idea can be found in line C233 with 10...a5.

12...a4 13.♖d1

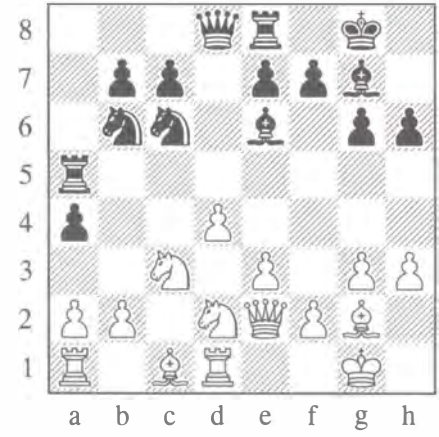
Preventing ...e5 for the time being.

13...♗e6 14.♘d2

This looks like the most promising idea. In case of the natural 14.e4 Black can bravely accept the pawn with 14...♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.♗xh6 ♗c4! 17.♕f3 e5 with equal chances.

14...♖a5!?

Black finds a remarkable way to activate his rook. Here the rook helps to control the d5-square while also supporting the thematic ...e5 break. On the other hand, with all the minor pieces still on the board, the rook might be subjected to an attack at some point.



15.♖b1!?N

This is my improvement. The idea is to prepare the b2-b4 advance to take advantage of the position of the black rook.

15.♘de4 ♕c8 16.♔h2?!

After this Black's set-up works perfectly.

The principled continuation was 16.♘c5, when Black has to sacrifice an exchange by means of: 16...♗xh3 17.♘xb7 ♗xg2 18.♘xa5 ♕h3 19.f3 ♗xf3 20.♕xf3 ♘xa5 White is probably better here, but Black has definite compensation, due to the vulnerable position of White's king.

16...♗c4 17.♕c2 e5 18.dxe5 ♘b4 19.♕d2 ♖axe5∓

This was Cvitan – Kozul, Reggio Emilia 1993. Black has obtained an excellent position and went on to win a nice game.

15...♕c8

Another option is 15...♕a8 16.b4 axb3 17.♘xb3 ♗c4 18.♕e1 ♖a7 19.a4± with pressure on the queenside.

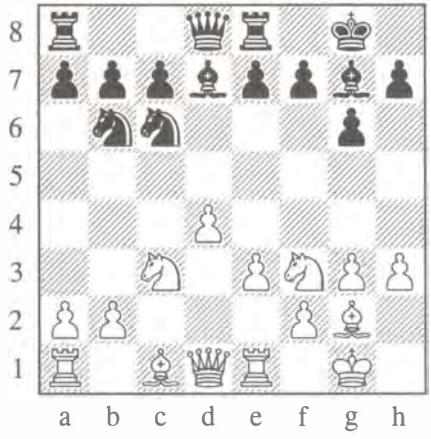
16.b4 axb3 17.♘xb3 ♗c4

If 17...♖a8 18.d5 ♗xc3 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.♗xc6 ♗xh3 21.e4 I do not believe Black has sufficient compensation.

18.♕b2 ♖a8 19.♘c5 ♖d8 20.♕c2!±

White keeps definite pressure on the queenside.

C232) 10...♗d7 11.h3



Once again we see this useful waiting move. Now White is ready to meet ...♕c8 with ♔h2.

11...e5

Black can first insert 11...♕c8 12.♔h2 and only then carry out the thematic 12...e5, but this does not change the overall evaluation of the position. Atishay – Nadig, Mumbai 2008, continued 13.d5 ♘a5 14.e4 ♘ac4 15.b3 ♘d6 16.a4 a5, and now the simple 17.♗e3N f5 18.♖c1 would have given White a comfortable edge.

12.d5 ♘e7 13.e4 c6

Unlike the main line C234, Black does not have the g4-square available for his bishop. On the other hand his ...♗d7 move vacated the c8-square for the knight, meaning that d5-d6 is of no concern here.

14.a4!

This is a thematic idea for this variation.

14...cxd5 15.exd5 ♘f5 16.♘e4 ♘c4

Black's moves appear perfectly natural, but somehow he fails to equalize.

17.g4! ♘fd6

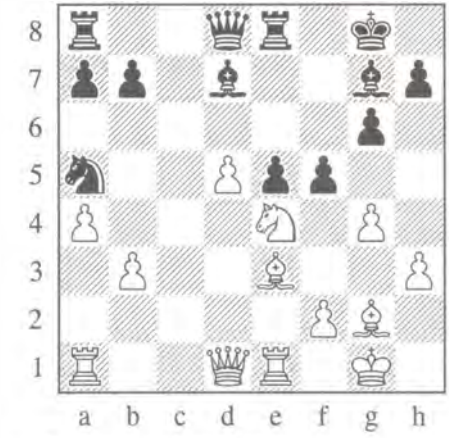
I also considered 17...♘d4, when White maintains an edge with 18.♘xd4 exd4 19.b3 ♘a5 20.♗f4 ♕b6 21.♖b1.

18.♘fd2!

After this powerful move Black cannot maintain the blockade on d6.

18...f5 19.♘xc4 ♘xc4 20.b3! ♘a5 21.♗g5 ♕b6 22.♗e3 ♕d8

This position occurred in Izoria – Kempinski, Ohrid 2001. Here White missed an opportunity to increase his advantage:



23.♘c5!N e4 24.♖c1 ♖c8 25.d6±

White's pieces are tremendously active and the d-pawn is a real threat.

C233) 10...a5!?



This subtle move has become quite topical lately. Black takes control of some extra space on the queenside and waits for a favourable moment to strike in the centre with ...e5.

11.♕e2!?

This is an interesting new attempt to fight for the advantage. White intends to place his rook on d1, which should make Black think twice before executing his intended ...e7-e5 advance.

11.b3 e5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5 14.♗b2 c6 is acceptable enough for Black, the latest example from Grandmaster praxis being Drozdovskij – Kempinski, Germany 2008.

Interestingly, when I wrote the first draft of the present chapter, 11.♕e2 was a move that I found by myself, and I intended to present it as an interesting novelty. However, between then and the time of publication, it has so far been played in no less than five (!) different games. This can only be a good thing insofar as it allows us to draw more informed conclusions about the objective merits of the move. So far, the evidence appears quite promising for White.

11...e5

The following options also deserve our consideration.

11...♗e6N has not been tested yet. 12.♖d1 ♗c4 13.♕c2 (This is more accurate than 13.♕e1 ♘b4 14.b3 ♗a6 when Black has counterplay.) 13...♘b4 14.♕b1 a4 15.e4 ♕d7 16.♗e3± White has the more pleasant game, although the position remains quite complicated.

11...a4 12.♖d1 ♗f5?!

This seems a bit strange, as it provokes White to win some tempos.

Another line is 12...♖a5 13.♘e1 ♗f5 14.♗d2 and Black's rook on a5 is completely misplaced.

I also examined 12...♗g4, when 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 e5 15.dxe5 ♕g5 16.♗d2 ♗xe5 17.♖ac1 leaves White with a pleasant edge.

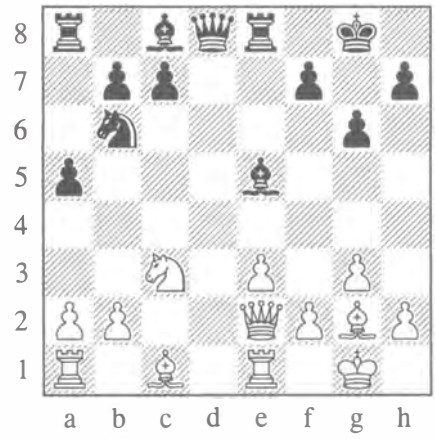
13.d5 ♘a5 14.♘d4 ♕c8

A sad necessity, as Black can hardly play 14...♗d7 in view of the elegant 15.♘e6!.

15.♘xf5 ♕xf5 16.e4 ♕c8 17.e5±

White has achieved everything he could wish for in this line, Diamant – D. Howell, Puerto Madryn 2009.

12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5



14.e4!

The first game to feature White's 11.♕e2 was Ljubojevic – Grischuk, Villarabredo 2009. In that encounter he failed to achieve anything special after 14.f4 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♗f5!? 16.♗xb7 ♖b8 17.♗f3 ♗e4 when Black had nice compensation due to his domination over the light squares and the passivity of White's bishop.

The text started out as my own improvement, but it has since been played three times before the book was published.

14...♗e6

14...c6 is too slow and allows White to carry out his plan without problems. 15.♗e3 ♗e6 16.f4 ♗g7 17.e5 Blocking the g7-bishop and intending to penetrate with the knight to d6. 17...f6 An understandable decision, given the previous comment. 18.♖ad1 ♕c7 19.exf6 ♗xf6 20.♘e4 ♗e7 (if 20...♗g7 21.♘d6± Black's position is very difficult) We have been following the game Tkachiev – Maze, Nimes 2009. At this point the simple 21.♗d4!N would have left Black in considerable danger, due to the exposed position of his king.

14...a4 occurred in Khismatullin – Efimenko, Ohrid 2009. Now White should have played 15.f4N ♗g7 16.♗e3 a3 17.♖ad1 ♕e7 18.e5 axb2 19.♗xb6! cxb6 20.♕xb2 maintaining a long-term advantage, due to his superior pawn structure.

15.f4 ♗g7

The computer likes 15...♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♗d5, although I cannot imagine many human players being attracted by this. In any case, I believe that after 17.♕f2 ♗c6 18.♗a3! intending ♗c5-d4, the vulnerability of Black's dark squares should tell eventually.

I also analysed 15...♗d4† 16.♗e3 ♘c4 17.♗f2! (The obvious 17.♗xd4 leads to unclear play after 17...♕xd4† 18.♔h1 ♖ed8 19.♖ad1 ♕c5.) 17...c6 18.♖ed1!? ♗xf2† 19.♕xf2 ♕b6 20.b3 ♕xf2† 21.♔xf2 ♘b6 22.e5! The endgame is certainly better for White, who intends ♘e4 in the nearest future.

16.♗e3 ♕e7 17.e5

Suddenly Black's position starts to become uncomfortable.

17...♖ab8

This position occurred in Rogozenko – Areshchenko, Germany 2009. Now White has a wide choice, but the most accurate would have been:



18.♕f2!N

White's advantage is obvious. Aside from his superiority in the centre, he has two concrete threats in 19.♗c5 and 19.♘b5. Of course, there is also the option of slowly improving the position with ideas such as ♘e4.

C234) 10...e5 11.d5

Now we have reached an important crossroads for Black. Here he can consider **C2341) 11...♘e7** and **C2342) 11...♘a5**.

C2341) 11...♘e7

This has brought Black excellent practical results, but White's play can be improved.

12.e4 ♗g4

Here I developed the following plan for White:

13.a4 c6 14.a5 ♘c4



15.h3!N

Having analysed this important novelty in some detail, I believe it promises White good chances to fight for the advantage. The only previous game continued 15.a6 bxa6 16.♕b3, Krisko – Soucek, Czechoslovakia 1989, and now Black could have achieved comfortable play by means of 16...cxd5!N 17.exd5 ♕c8.

15...♗xf3 16.♕xf3 cxd5

The first point worth noting is that the a5-pawn is poisoned: 16...♘xa5? 17.d6! and Black loses one of his knights.

Black can also try

16...♘d6 17.♕d3 cxd5

Not so good is 17...c5?! 18.♗e3 ♖c8 19.♘a4! and White is clearly better.

18.♘xd5 ♘c6 19.h4!?

I like this move, not only preparing ♗g5, but also vacating the h3-square for the bishop.

19...♘xa5

This is obviously the principled continuation. Instead if 19...h6 20.♗d2 White enjoys a pleasant edge.

20.♗g5 f6 21.♘xf6†

There is a second promising continuation in 21.♗e3!? ♘c6 (21...♘ac4 22.♗xa7 is strong) 22.♖ed1 with excellent compensation.

21... ♗xf6 22.♗xf6 ♕xf6 23.♖xa5 a6 24.♖d5

White has regained his pawn while keeping a stable advantage.

17.♗g5 h6

The idea to sacrifice an exchange for the strong passed d-pawn does not work: 17...d4?! 18.♘d5 h6 19.♘xe7† ♖xe7 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♕b3! ♘d6 22.a6 b6 23.♖ec1 and White is clearly better.

17...dxe4 allows White to obtain a strong initiative after 18.♘xe4, for instance 18...♘xa5 19.♖ed1 ♕c7 20.♘f6† ♗xf6 21.♕xf6 and wins.

18.♗xe7 ♖xe7 19.♘xd5 ♖e6 20.♖ec1 ♖c8 21.h4!

White has definite pressure, thanks to the superiority of both of his minor pieces over their black counterparts.

C2342) 11...♘a5 12.e4 c6



13.b3!?

This is the only way for White to fight for the advantage. It may appear risky to weaken

the long diagonal, but it turns out that White has enough tactical resources to justify the decision.

Other moves are not so dangerous for Black. One recent high-level encounter continued 13.♗g5 f6 14.♗e3 cxd5 15.♗xb6 axb6 16.♘xd5 ♗e6 17.♕e2 ♗xd5 18.exd5 f5 and Black easily solved his opening problems, Ivanchuk – Dominguez, Sofia 2009.

13...cxd5 14.exd5



We have reached our final branching point of the chapter. Here Black should choose between **C23421) 14...e4** and **C23422) 14...♗g4**.

C23421) 14...e4

This appears critical, but the tactics turn out in White's favour.

15.♘xe4! ♘xd5

The immediate rook capture is very bad for Black and it is no surprise that it has never occurred in practice. 15...♗xa1? 16.♗g5 f6 17.♗xf6! ♗xf6 18.♘xf6† ♕xf6 19.♖xe8† ♔f7 20.♕e1 with a winning position.

An important alternative is:
15...♖xe4 16.♖xe4 ♗xa1 17.♗g5

Only this move enables White to fight for an opening advantage.
17.♗d2 ♗f5 18.♖e1 ♗f6 19.♗xa5 ♕xd5 20.♕xd5 ♘xd5 was equal in Gagunashvili – Sutovsky, Rishon Le Zion 2006.

17...♗f6

Black cannot play 17...f6 18.♗d2 ♗f5 19.♖e1 ♘xd5 20.♕xa1± and despite the material equality his position is very difficult.

18.♗xf6 ♕xf6 19.♖e8†

19.♕d2 ♗f5 20.♖e1 ♘xb3 21.axb3 ♖d8 is perfectly playable for Black.

19...♔g7 20.♕e1 ♗g4 21.♖xa8 ♘xa8 22.♘e5 ♗c8 23.b4

White was clearly better in Podgaets – Nedilko, Odessa 2007.

16.♗g5 f6 17.♗d2 ♘c6

Despite the material equality and symmetrical structure, Black is still a long way from equality as White's forces are much better mobilized.

18.♖c1 ♗f5?

A bad move, but it was hard to suggest a fully satisfactory continuation. Now in the game Tkachiev – Mikhalevski, Ajaccio 2007, White should have played:



19.♘c5!N ♖xe1† 20.♗xe1!

Black can hardly avoid material losses.

C23422) 14...♗g4 15.♗a3!

This is a key move. The bishop is heading for b4, where it will attack the misplaced knight on a5.

15...f5

We should also consider:

15...e4

This principled continuation has been played many times, but it just seems to lead by force to an inferior position for Black.

16.♘xe4 ♕xd5

Once again White's rook is untouchable: 16...♗xa1? 17.♕xa1 ♘xd5 18.♘e5 ♗e6 19.♘d6 and Black's position just collapses.

Black can also take on d5 with the knight, but this also fails to solve his problems: 16...♘xd5 17.♖c1 ♘c6 18.♘d6! ♖xe1† 19.♕xe1 ♖b8 (19...♕f6 20.♕e4± brings no relief either) 20.♘xb7 ♖xb7 21.♖xc6 and White remains with a healthy extra pawn, Navara – Ivanchuk, Prague (rapid) 2009.

17.♕xd5 ♘xd5 18.♖ac1

After a nice tactical battle a near-symmetrical position has arisen in which Black unexpectedly faces serious problems, due to the poor coordination of his knights and the vulnerability of the h1-a8 diagonal.

18...♘c6

If 18...♖ac8 Black loses material after 19.♖xc8 ♖xc8 20.♘d6 ♖b8 21.♘xf7!.

19.♘d6 ♖xe1† 20.♖xe1 ♘db4 21.♗xb4 ♘xb4 22.♘g5!

This very strong move maintains White's initiative.

22...f6

The most stubborn defence. White's task would be easier after: 22...♘xa2 23.♗xb7 ♖b8 24.♗d5 ♗f6 25.♘gxf7±

23.♗xb7

Also worthy of consideration was 23.♘e6!? ♗xe6 (23...♘xa2 is met strongly by 24.♘xg7 ♔xg7 25.♘e8†! and Black loses both his b7- and f6-pawns) 24.♖xe6 ♘xa2 25.♖e7 with an initiative.

23...♖b8

This position occurred in Tkachiev – Iordachescu, Dresden 2007. Here White missed the best continuation:



24.♖e4!N fxg5 25.♖xb4 ♖d8 26.♖xg4 ♖xd6 27.♖xg5 ♖d2 28.♖d5 ♖xa2 29.♖d7±

With a very difficult endgame for Black.

15...♖c8

This was recommended by Ftacnik in *ChessBase Magazine 118*. Now White should continue with:

16.♖c1! ♗h6

Or 16...f5 17.♗b4 ♘d7 18.♕d2 with an advantage.

17.♖c2 ♗f5

Objectively better is 17...f5, although White keeps clearly better chances after: 18.♗b4 ♘d7 19.♘a4 ♖xc2 20.♕xc2 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3 e4 22.♗e2±



18.♖ce2!!

A great tactical idea, found with the help of my silicon friend. The point is revealed after:

18...♖xc3 19.♘xe5

Despite being a piece up, Black is unable to defend against the numerous threats, for instance:

19...♗d7 20.♗b4 ♖c1 21.♘xd7! ♖xe2 22.♘f6† ♕xf6 23.♕xe2

White will regain the piece while keeping an extra pawn and a winning position.

16.♗b4 ♘d7

The alternative 16...e4 17.♗xa5 ♕d6 occurred in the very recent game Caruana – Dominguez Perez, Wijk aan Zee 2010. Here White's strongest continuation would have been 18.♖c1!N exf3 19.♗f1. White is threatening ♘b5, and 19...a6 is well met by 20.♖e6! ♖xe6 21.dxe6. This is actually the same as the game, except for the position of the rook on c1 instead of b1, which can only favour White. In my opinion his advantage is already decisive. One important point is that 21...♕xe6? can be refuted by the elegant 22.♘a4! winning material, thanks to the idea of ♗c4 winning the queen.

17.♕d2 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♗f8

Black could also try 18...e4 19.♗g2 b6, though after 20.f3! exf3 21.♖xe8† ♕xe8 22.♗xf3 ♘e5 23.♗g2 White maintains a pleasant edge, thanks to his bishop pair and strong passed pawn.

We have been following the game Asis Gargatagli – Kalod, Sabadell 2007, in which White failed to find the best continuation.



19.♗xf8!N ♖xf8 20.d6 e4

Black has to block this bishop, otherwise after 20...♘c6 21.♗d5† ♔h8 22.♘b5 White's advantage is undisputable.

21.♗e2 ♖c8 22.♖ac1

White's chances are preferable, thanks to the strong d-pawn.

Conclusion:

The system featured in the present chapter, involving ...d5 without the preparatory ...c6, leads to positions more in keeping with the general character of the Grünfeld and is the natural choice for players looking for a dynamic and unbalanced game. White starts out with a slight superiority in the centre, having exchanged on d5. For this reason, most of Black's attempts to obtain counterplay will be based on preparing ...e5 or ...c5. Depending on the specific circumstances, a variety of potential central pawn configurations might occur. We have seen that many of the resulting positions contain an intriguing blend of positional and tactical motifs, and are likely to provide plenty of complex challenges for both sides. Ultimately I believe White's prospects to be slightly superior, and a player armed with the analysis contained in these pages will have excellent chances to create problems for his opponent.

Chapter 20

Grünfeld Defence



Solid Variation

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♘f3 d5

5.b3 ♗g7 6.♗g2

A) 6...dxc4 338
B) 6...0–0 7.0–0 339
B1) 7...♗e6 340
B2) 7...c5 341
B3) 7...♘e4 8.♗b2 342
B4) 7...♗f5 8.♗b2 345
B41) 8...♘bd7 345
B42) 8...♕c8 345
B43) 8...♘e4 346
B5) 7...♘bd7 348
B6) 7...a5 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♗b2 349
B61) 9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3 350
B62) 9...♗f5 354
B7) 7...dxc4 8.bxc4 c5 9.♗b2 357
B71) 9...♕b6 357
B72) 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4 358
B721) 10...♘g4 359
B722) 10...♘c6!? 360
B723) 10...♕b6 11.♕b3 361
B7231) 11...♘bd7 361
B7232) 11...♘fd7 12.e3 362
B72321) 12...♘c5 362
B72322) 12...♘a6 363
B72323) 12...♘c6 364

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.b3 ♗g7 6.♗g2

The solid system with ...c6 and ...d5 in the Grünfeld has proved to be one of the most difficult nuts to crack. I was determined to suggest the g3-variation for various reasons, one of them being that I play the Grünfeld at times and have found this line difficult to face in practice. However, certain theoretical problems remained. The main line against this system does not involve b2-b3, with White instead preferring to exchange on d5. However, after ...cxd5 it seems unlikely that any advantage can be achieved in this symmetrical position.

Eventually I came up with a very interesting pawn sacrifice in the 5.b3 line (13.♘c3!! in line B72323), shifting the foundation under the black position, and suddenly offering White good chances everywhere. Only the future will tell if this evaluation will stand the test of time. In the short term it seems to offer Black a lot of practical problems, which I have not been able to solve easily for him.

At this point we should divide our attention between the sideline **A) 6...dxc4** and the main lines starting after **B) 6...0–0**.

A) 6...dxc4 7.bxc4 c5

This is reminiscent of the main line, which can be found in line B7 (page 357). However, the fact that neither side has castled can lead to some independent possibilities, although transpositions can easily occur as well. I faced this line against a Grünfeld specialist, Emil Sutovsky, last year.

8.♗b2 cxd4 9.♘xd4

9.0–0 ♘c6 10.♘xd4 0–0 transposes to the main line; I know Emil has played this position as well. With this particular move order, it looks interesting for Black to try 10...♗d7!?N intending a rapid development of the queenside with ...♖c8.

9...♕b6

9...0–0 10.0–0 would just transpose to our main variation.

10.♕b3

In Avrukh – Sutovsky, Jubilee Open 2009, I preferred 10.♘b3 0–0 11.0–0. Now Black could have obtained a good position with the natural 11...♖d8 12.♕c1 ♘c6 13.♘c3 ♗e6.

10...♘fd7

This was the move I feared during the game. The problem for White is that 11.e3 is unsatisfactory due to 11...♘c5 forcing a favourable queen exchange, as 12.♕a3?? is impossible in view of 12...♕xb2 and 13....♘d3† winning a piece.

It almost goes without saying that 10...0–0 11.0–0 again transposes to our main variation.



11.0–0

11.♘d2 allowed Black to get a comfortable game after 11...♘c6 12.♘b5 ♘c5 13.♕a3 ♗xb2 14.♕xb2 0–0, Dizdarevic – Shirov, Sarajevo 2004.

11...♘c6!?

This is the main idea that gives the present line independent value. I only found one game reference, in which Black played 11...0–0 transposing to line B7 as usual.

11...♗xd4?!

This was the idea I was afraid of during my game with Sutovsky, but it is hardly correct.

12.♕xb6 ♗xb6

Objectively better would be 12...axb6 but then Black's idea is senseless, as it gifts White the advantage of the two bishops after 13.♗xd4.

13.♗xh8 f6 14.a4!

Defending against ...♗d4.

14...♔f7

Or 14...♘c6 15.♗d5! ♘c5 16.♗g7! and the bishop escapes via the h6-square.

15.a5 ♗d4 16.♖a3

The threat of 17.a6 gives White an important tempo.

16...♘c5 17.♖d1 ♗e5



18.♖e3!

An important tactical idea White is ready to sacrifice an exchange in order to escape with his bishop.

18...♘c6 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♖xe5 fxe5 21.♗xe5

White has an extra pawn and good winning chances.

12.♘b5

12.e3 ♘a5 13.♕c2 ♘xc4 14.♕xc4 ♕xb2 15.♘c3 0–0 16.♖ab1 ♕a3 17.♘db5 gives White reasonable compensation for the pawn, but not enough to claim a real advantage.

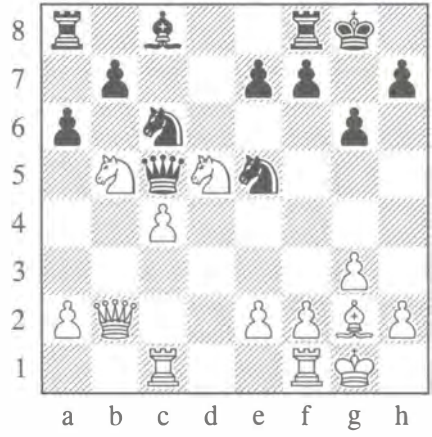
12...♗xb2 13.♕xb2 0–0 14.♘1c3

White can also consider 14.♘d2!?, e.g. 14...a6 15.♕a3 ♕c5 16.♕xc5 ♘xc5 17.♘c3 with a slight initiative.

14...♘de5 15.♘d5 ♕c5 16.♖ac1 a6

If 16...♘xc4 White should continue with 17.♘bc7 ♖b8 18.♕c3 b5 19.♘xb5 ♖xb5 20.♕xc4 ♕xc4 21.♖xc4 ♗e6 22.e4 ♘e5 23.♖c7 and White will end up with an extra pawn.

Instead 17.♖xc4 ♕xc4 18.♖c1 ♕a4 19.♘bc7 ♕d4 20.♕xd4 ♘xd4 21.♖d1 ♘xe2† 22.♔f1 ♘xg3† 23.hxg3 ♖b8 24.♘xe7† ♔h8! would allow Black to hold the position.



17.♕a3! ♕xa3 18.♘xa3 ♗f5 19.f4 ♘d7 20.c5

It may not be much, but White definitely keeps a small advantage.

B) 6...0–0 7.0–0



At this major branching point we need to consider the following options: **B1) 7...♗e6**, **B2) 7...c5**, **B3) 7...♘e4**, **B4) 7...♗f5**, **B5) 7...♘bd7**, **B6) 7...a5** and finally the main line starting with **B7) 7...dxc4**.

B1) 7...♗e6

Not a very popular move, but White must still react precisely to get an advantage.

8.♘bd2

Obviously Black is not concerned about 8.♘g5, as after 8...♗f5 the knight is misplaced on g5.

8...a5

The alternatives are:

8...♘e4?! 9.♘xe4!

White can also play calmly with 9.♗b2, but the text move enables him to take advantage of his opponent's inaccuracy to initiate favourable complications.

9...dxe4 10.♘g5 ♕xd4

Much worse is 10...♗g4 11.♗e3 c5 12.d5! ♗xa1 13.♕xa1 and Black is in trouble, as was proved in the following encounter: 13...b6 14.♘xe4 f6 15.d6! ♘d7 16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.♘g5 e6 18.h3 with a decisive advantage in Le Roux – Kovchan, France 2007.

10...♗xd4 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♗h6 ♗g7 13.♗xg7 ♕xd1 14.♖fxd1 ♔xg7 occurred in Gomes – Mikadze, Gaziantep 2008, and now White should have played: 15.b4!N ♘a6 16.♖d7±

11.♕xd4 ♗xd4 12.♘xe6 fxe6 13.♖b1 ♘a6 14.b4!

White regains the pawn and keeps an obvious edge, thanks to his bishop pair.

8...♕c8 9.♗a3!

A very good moment to develop the dark-squared bishop to a3, while at the same time vacating the c1-square for the rook.

9...♖e8 10.♖c1 dxc4?!

A lesser evil would be 10...♗h3 11.cxd5 ♗xg2 12.♔xg2 ♘xd5 13.e4 ♘c7 14.♗b2, although here too White has a pleasant edge.

11.bxc4 ♗h3 12.e4 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♘fd7 14.♕b3 c5 15.d5 e5 16.♘e1 ♘a6 17.♘d3 b6 18.♗b2 ♘c7 19.f4

White emerged with a clear advantage from the opening phase in Jirovsky – Zwanzger, Bavaria 1999.

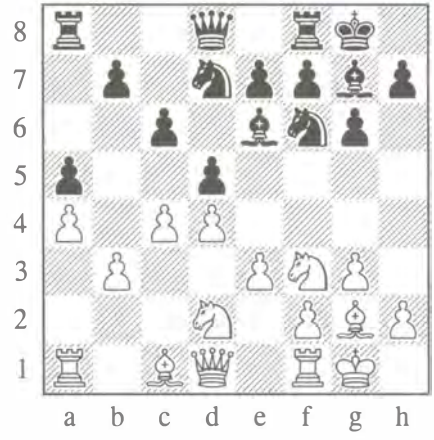
9.e3!?

Again I favour this flexible approach; it is important for White to retain different options for the development of his dark-squared bishop. Black is doing fine after 9.♗b2 a4 10.♖e1 axb3 11.axb3 ♘a6.

9...♘bd7

If 9...a4 White should favour the active development of his bishop with 10.♗a3 (10.bxa4 dxc4 11.♘g5 does not work in view of 11...♗d5 12.e4 c3!) 10...♖e8 11.♕e2 ♕b6 12.♖fc1 ♘bd7 13.b4! Preventing the possible opening of the a-file. 13...dxc4 14.♘xc4 ♕a6 15.♗f1± and White has a pleasant game.

10.a4!?N



This interesting and promising concept has not yet been tested. White simply prevents Black's main idea of advancing his a-pawn, at the same time intending to continue his normal development by mean of ♗a3, ♕e2 and ♖fc1. Black's set-up with the bishop on e6 looks to me pretty dubious here. Please pay attention to the timing of the last move; White only played a4 after the black knight had committed itself to d7; otherwise it would have found a nice home on a6, eyeing the potential outpost on b4.

B2) 7...c5



Black moves his c-pawn for the second time, but at the same time he challenges White's centre and hopes to create pressure on the long diagonal.

8.♗b2

This natural move is best.

8...cxd4

8...dxc4 9.bxc4 leads to the main line B7. But there is an alternative to investigate:

8...♘c6 9.dxc5 dxc4

This has been played in two games. Now I found an interesting novelty:

10.♘d4!?N

A quite natural improvement of White's play. Here are a few exemplary lines I analysed:

10...♗d7

10...♘xd4 11.♕xd4 ♕xd4 12.♗xd4 ♖d8 13.e3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♘d5 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♘a3! White has definite pressure, thanks to his powerful bishop.

11.♕c2 cxb3 12.axb3 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗c6 14.♗xc6 bxc6

Black cannot play 14...♕xd4? in view of 15.♖a4!.

15.♖d1±

White has easy play against Black's weak pawns on the queenside.

9.cxd5 ♕xd5

An obvious alternative is 9...♘xd5, against which I propose 10.♘xd4N (The only game played in this line continued with 10.♗xd4 ♘f6!, and Black wins an important tempo with ...♘c6, P. Nikolic – Krasenkow, Elista 1998.) I analysed the following line: 10...♕a5 11.♕d2! ♕xd2 12.♘xd2 ♖d8 13.♘c4 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♘c6 15.♗b2 ♗e6 16.♖ac1 when White has a small but stable edge thanks to his bishop pair.



10.♘xd4!N

Again a clear improvement over the timid 10.♕xd4.

10...♕h5

This was the idea behind 9...♕xd5.

11.♕c1!

Otherwise 11...♖d8 would be unpleasant. Despite the innocent appearance of White's position, he still remains with slightly better chances, as shown in the following line I analysed.

11...♘a6 12.♘c3 ♖d8 13.♖d1 ♖b8 14.♘f3 ♖xd1†

Or 14...♗d7 15.♕e3 ♕c5 16.♕xc5 ♘xc5 17.♘e5±.

15.♕xd1 ♗e6 16.♕d2

White retains the better chances, due to Black misplaced pieces on the queenside.

B3) 7...♘e4 8.♗b2



Here there is a split between **B31) 8...dxc4**, **B32) 8...♗e6** and **B33) 8...♘d7**.

B31) 8...dxc4 9.♕c2!

The best reply, although after 9.bxc4 ♕b6 10.♕b3 c5 we would get the position from the 7...dxc4 line.

9...♘d6

The main point of White's previous move is that Black cannot support his knight by means of 9...♗f5? since after 10.g4 Black unavoidably loses material.

10.bxc4 ♗f5

Black wins a tempo for developing his pieces, but it can hardly make up for surrendering the centre.

11.♕c1 ♘a6 12.♘bd2 c5 13.d5 f6 14.♘e1 e5



15.e4N

This obvious move is a novelty. Instead after 15.dxe6 ♗xe6 16.♘d3, Ehlvest – Perelshteyn, Stillwater 2007, Black might get a reliable position after 16...♗h6!N.

15...♗d7 16.♘d3 ♕e7 17.♕c3

White intends ♖ae1 and f4. His chances are definitely better, as he controls the centre and his pieces are much better mobilized.

B32) 8...♗e6 9.♘bd2

White immediately takes the opportunity to challenge the opponent's centralized knight.

9...♘xd2

Black can also play:

9...f5

But in my opinion the Stonewall structure always promises a White long-lasting edge, especially given the unusual placement of Black's bishops. We will look at a few illustrative examples.

10.e3 ♘d7

Another game continued: 10...♔h8 11.♕e2 ♘xd2 12.♘xd2 ♘d7 13.cxd5! With the queen on e2, White always has the idea of jumping to b5. We will see the same idea again and again throughout this chapter. 13...♗xd5 14.♗xd5 cxd5 15.♕b5 ♘b6 16.♖fc1 ♕d6 17.♕a5 White has serious pressure on the queenside, Borovikov – Haub, Nettetal 2004.

11.♖c1

White should not change the character of the position with 11.♘xe4 dxe4 12.♘g5, since after 12...♗f7 Black has a normal game.

11...♔h8 12.♕c2 a5 13.a4 ♕e8 14.♖fd1 ♖c8 15.♘e1 ♕f7 16.♘d3

White had a nice edge in Kharitonov – Bareev, Sochi 1987.

10.♕xd2!



This is an important point. White can sacrifice the c4-pawn temporarily, as the ♘g5 idea is quite troublesome for Black.

10...dxc4

This is a principled reaction, although objectively it is not the best. Besides this Black has also played:

10...h6 11.♘e5 ♘d7 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♖ac1!?N

I see no point in removing the knight from the centre, as happened in the following encounter: 13.♘d3 ♘f6 14.♖ac1 ♗f5 and Black was doing fine in Milov – Lechtynsky, Bayern 2003.

13...♘xe5

Also after 13...♘f6 14.♕b4 ♖b8 15.f3 ♘e8 16.♖c5± White obtains definite pressure on the queenside.

14.dxe5 ♖c8

Black cannot play 14...♕d7? in view of 15.e4 ♖fd8 16.exd5 ♗xd5 17.♖fd1 e6 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♖c5 and White grabs a valuable central pawn.

15.♖xc8 ♕xc8 16.♖c1 ♕d7 17.♕c2

White is better thanks to his control over the c-file.

10...♘a6 11.♖ac1

This keeps all options open, although 11.♘g5 ♗f5 12.e4 dxe4 13.♘xe4 would give White a slightly better position as well.

11...♕d6 12.♘e5 ♖fd8 13.♖fd1

White has more space and obviously more useful moves.

13...♖ac8 14.♕a5! dxc4

The justification of White's previous move can be seen in the following line: 14...♕b4 15.♘xc6! bxc6 16.♕xa6 dxc4 17.♗a3! with advantage.

15.♘xc4 ♕c7 16.♕e1

The arising pawn structure promises White a pleasant and enduring edge, Tal – Botvinnik, Moscow 1960.

11.♘g5 ♕d7

This is the main move according to theory.

An important alternative is 11...cxb3 12.♘xe6 fxe6, which has occurred a few times. An interesting new idea would be 13.♕e3!?N intending to grab the b3-pawn with the queen in order to keep the b-file open to attack the queenside. A critical line runs 13...bxa2

14.♕xe6† ♔h8 15.♕xa2 ♘d7 16.d5! and White has a substantial initiative.

11...♗g4 would be an admission of failure, as Black just gives up the centre. 12.bxc4 h6 was Schmidt – Gauglitz, Dresden 1985, and now after the accurate 13.h3!N ♗c8 14.♘e4 White already has the serious positional threat of 15.d5. His advantage is obvious.

12.♘xe6 ♕xe6 13.bxc4 ♕xc4

Now, in the game Jansa – Biolek, Czech Republic 2005, White missed a strong idea.

14.d5!N

This dynamic move is not at all easy to meet. Here is one possible continuation:

14...♗xb2 15.♕xb2 ♕b5 16.♖ab1 ♕xb2 17.♖xb2 cxd5 18.♗xd5 ♘d7 19.♖xb7 ♘f6 20.♗f3

The resulting endgame is highly unpleasant for Black.

B33) 8...♘d7



This is another popular set-up. The second knight comes to f6 to reinforce the position of the central steed.

9.e3

In my opinion this is the most promising plan for White. Conventional theory considers 9.♘bd2 as White's main option, but after 9...♘df6 10.♘e5 ♗f5! I see nothing wrong with Black's position.

In general I do not believe that White can achieve much by exchanging the knight on e4, as this would completely justify the decision to bring the second knight to f6. Instead White should develop his pieces around the intruder on e4, before eventually expelling it with f2-f3, after suitable preparation.

9...♘df6

9...b6 has been played a few times. This forces White to adopt a slightly different approach compared to the main line, so I developed the following plan, which seems quite promising. 10.♘bd2 ♘df6 11.♘e5 ♗b7 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.f3 ♘xd2 14.♕xd2 White has a slight pull. If Black plays too ambitiously, for instance with 14...♘d7 15.♘d3 c5?!, then White can increase his advantage with: 16.cxd5 cxd4 17.♖xc8 ♕xc8 18.e4±

Another line is:

9...a5

This is another solid continuation. I think White's best chance to fight for the advantage is:

10.♕e2!?N

A recent game saw 10.♘c3, but Black responded with the nice 10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘c5! and after 12.♘d2 ♗f5 13.a3 ♗d3 14.♖e1 ♘e4 15.♗b2 ♘f6 White failed to achieve anything and a draw was agreed in Borovikov – Miroshnichenko, Alushta 2009.

10...a4 11.♖c1 ♘df6

Or 11...axb3 12.axb3 ♖xa1 13.♗xa1 ♕b6 14.♕a2! ♘df6 15.♘e5 with a typical slight plus.

12.♘e5 ♗e6 13.♘a3 axb3 14.f3! ♘d6 15.axb3±

White retains an edge, thanks to his spatial superiority.

10.♘e5 ♗e6

After 10...♗f5, Gyorkos – Ruck, Austria 1998, White can drive away Black's minor pieces by means of 11.g4!?N ♗e6 12.f3 ♘d6 13.c5 ♘b5 14.a4 ♘c7 15.♘c3 with a clear space superiority.

11.♕e2

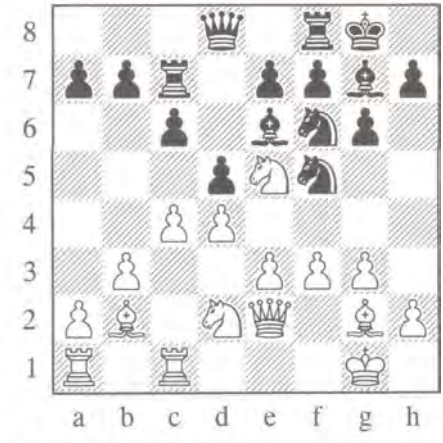
A very flexible set-up. Now White is ready to play f3, chasing Black's knight from the centre.

11...♖c8

Black has also tried 11...♕a5 but it hardly changes anything. After 12.f3 ♘d6 13.♖c1 dxc4 14.bxc4 ♘d7 15.♘xd7 ♗xd7 16.♘d2 ♖ae8 17.c5 ♕b5 18.♕xb5 ♘xb5 19.♘c4 White enjoyed a pleasant edge in Kalinitschew – Henzner, Bad Wiessee 1999.

12.♖c1 ♖c7 13.f3 ♘d6 14.♘d2 ♘f5

So far we have been following Tukmakov – Alterman, Elenite 1995. Here White should have continued with:

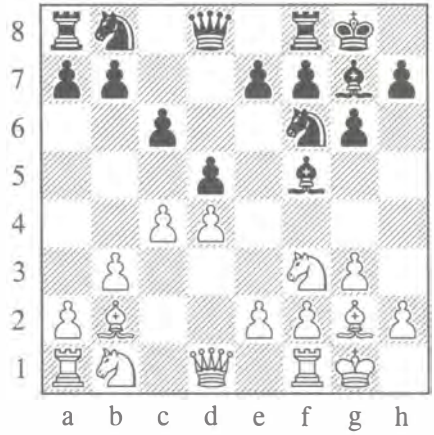


15.♕f2!N ♘d6 16.e4

With better prospects for White.

B4) 7...♗f5 8.♗b2

This is the usual move, although I see nothing wrong with starting with 8.♘c3 and only after 8...♘e4 playing 9.♗b2.



Here we have the following options: **B41) 8...♘bd7**, **B42) 8...♕c8** and **B43) 8...♘e4**.

Besides these, there is also 8...a5 9.♘c3 ♘e4 10.e3 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗e4 12.♗h3, but as so often, there is a transposition, this time to a position from line B6.

B41) 8...♘bd7 9.♘c3

I think this is more promising than 9.♘bd2, when there may follow 9...♘e4 10.♘h4 ♘xd2 11.♕xd2 ♗e6 12.e4 dxe4 13.♗xe4, reaching quite a popular position, which I believe to be perfectly playable for Black.

9...♘e4 10.e3 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗e4 12.♕e2

We have transposed to line B43 below.

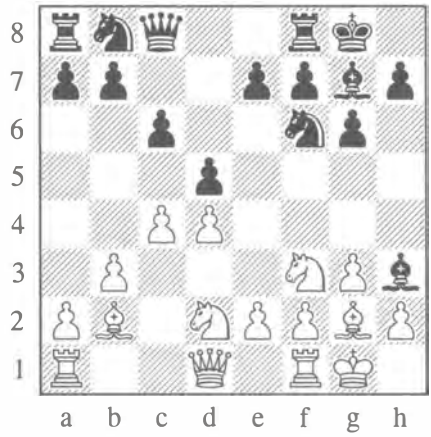
B42) 8...♕c8

The idea of swapping the light-squared bishops is thematic, but at the same time quite unusual in this particular position. It seems to me that Black loses too much time while executing his idea.

9.♘bd2

White has no reason to fear the bishop exchange. Besides, 9.♖e1 ♗h3 10.♗h1 ♕f5! 11.♘c3 ♘bd7 allows Black some activity.

9...♗h3



10.♕c2!?N

It is important to establish control over the e4-square, as after 10.♖e1 ♗xg2 11.♔xg2 Black has 11...♘e4.

10...♗xg2

After 10...♘a6 White continues with 11.♖fe1 and similar plans.

11.♔xg2

Now if White is allowed to play e4, he will be assured of a slight but lasting advantage, so it makes sense to check the following:

11...♕e6

Perhaps a better option would be 11...♕f5 12.♕xf5 gxf5 with a solid position, although after 13.b4! (13.cxd5 ♘xd5 should be alright for Black) 13...♘e4 14.♖fc1 White can still try to make something of his slight queenside initiative.

12.♖ae1

Again White threatens e4, so the following line is the only really consistent choice for Black.

12...♘e4 13.♘xe4 ♕xe4 14.♕xe4 dxe4 15.♘g5

It turns out that the simplifications do not solve Black's problems. The following line is virtually forced, and leads to a favourable endgame for White.

15...c5 16.e3 ♖d8 17.♖d1 ♘c6 18.d5! ♗xb2 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.♘xe4

White has a permanent advantage, thanks to Black's damaged queenside structure.

B43) 8...♘e4 9.♘c3

I also found it quite interesting to start with 9.e3 ♘d7 10.♕e2!?, but finally decided to focus on the more natural development of the knight.



9...♘xc3

This is the main idea of this set-up – Black vacates the e4-square for his bishop. He can also consider:

9...♘d7 10.e3 will usually transpose to the main line after 10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗e4.

9...dxc4 10.bxc4 c5

This has definite logic. Nevertheless it seems to me that White can retain an edge.

11.♘a4!

White achieves nothing after 11.♘h4 ♘xc3 12.♗xc3 ♗c8 13.e3 ♘c6, with pressure against the d4-pawn.

11...cxd4

White was ready to play d4-d5.

12.♘xd4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘c6 14.♗e3 ♕xd1 15.♖fxd1 ♘d6

This was played in Ribli – Yermolinsky, Manila 1992. Now White missed a good opportunity:



16.♘c5!N

After this strong move Black's problems are far from over. The justification for the pawn sacrifice is revealed in the following line:

16...♘xc4 17.♗h6 ♖fc8 18.♖ac1±

White dominates the board, thanks to his mighty bishop pair.

10.♗xc3 ♗e4 11.e3 ♘d7 12.♕e2

From this position White will try to chase Black's light-squared bishop away from e4, and Black will usually respond by exchanging it for the knight on f3. We will follow one illustrative example.

12...♕b6

12...♘f6 13.♖fc1 a5 14.♗f1 transposes to Bu Xiangzhi – Radjabov, examined in line B6.

13.♖fd1!

This is the best square for White's rook, as otherwise Black might have the idea of playing ...c6-c5 under favourable circumstances, for instance after 13.♖fc1 ♖fd8 14.♗f1 c5!.

13...♖fd8 14.♗h3

14.♗f1!? also deserves consideration.

14...♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘f6 16.♕e2 ♘e4

This position was reached in Huzman – Nunn, Amsterdam 1995.



17.♗e1!N

This improves over the slightly passive game continuation of 17.♗b2. From e1 the bishop supports White's play on the queenside with b4, a4 and so on. White was probably concerned about:

17...e5

This is the principled reaction, but the complications turn out in White's favour.

18.dxe5 ♗xe5 19.♖ac1 dxc4 20.♕xc4 ♘f6 21.♗b4!

In such a position the bishop pair will come into its own.

21...♖xd1† 22.♖xd1 ♖d8 23.♖xd8† ♕xd8 24.♕c5

White has definite pressure.

B5) 7...♘bd7

I was surprised to discover that this knight move is Black's third most popular choice in this line. It seems to me that the knight is slightly misplaced on d7, but Black hopes to achieve a harmonious set-up by fianchettoing his light-squared bishop.

8.♗b2 b6 9.♘c3



9...♗b7

The bishop can also move to a different square:

9...♗a6 10.♘d2

This is stronger than 10.♘e5 ♖c8.

10...♖c8

This position occurred in Stein – Krogius, Leningrad 1971. Now White should have played:

11.♖c1N

White intends e2-e4 next, and Black's attempt to obtain counterplay in the centre is doomed to fail.

11...c5

Now White gains a clear advantage with:

12.dxc5 dxc4

Also unsatisfactory is 12...d4 13.♘b5 ♗xb5 14.cxb5 bxc5 15.b4! when White opens the position favourably.

13.c6 ♘e5 14.b4!±

10.♕c2

The plan with ♘d2 is less promising with the bishop on b7 instead of a6, as seen after 10.♘d2 ♖c8 11.e4 e5! 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.exd5 cxd5 with good play for Black.

10...e6 11.♖ad1

Obviously White's main idea is to carry out the thematic e2-e4 advance at a suitable moment. The immediate 11.e4 is slightly premature in view of 11...dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♕c7, when Black carries out the programmed ...c6-c5 break.

11...♕c7



12.♗c1!?N

Rather a surprising move, isn't it? Before carrying out his main plan White intends to improve the position of his dark-squared bishop.

In a previous game White executed his main idea of 12.e4, but after 12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♘g5 ♘f6 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♖fd8 17.c5 ♖d7 Black's counterplay against the d4-pawn fully compensated the passivity of his light-squared bishop, Bu Xiangzhi – Ganguly, Vishakapatnam 2008.

12...b5

Another principled reply is 12...c5, when I analysed the following long line: 13.♗f4 ♕c8 14.♘b5 dxc4 15.♘d6 cxb3 16.♕xb3 ♕c6 17.♘xb7 ♘d5 18.♗d6 c4 19.♕c2 ♖fc8 20.e4 ♘c7 21.♗xc7 ♕xc7 22.e5 ♕xb7 23.♘g5 ♕a6 24.d5! with some advantage for White.

13.♗f4 ♕a5 14.♘d2!

The arising position reminds one of a Catalan, except for the unusual placement of the black bishop on g7.

14...♘h5

I also examined 14...bxc4 15.bxc4 ♗a6 16.♗d6 ♖fe8 17.♘b3 ♕d8 18.c5 e5 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♘d4 ♕c8 21.♕a4 and White has the better chances.

15.♗d6 ♖fc8 16.e3

White's chances are preferable.

B6) 7...a5



Pushing the a-pawn is a thematic idea in positions with a ...c6/...d5 set-up. Black not only gains some space on the queenside, but also intends to push his a-pawn further under favourable circumstances. On the negative side, White might one day be able to exploit the weakened b5-square, especially with the typical ♕e2-b5 manoeuvre after a pawn exchange on d5.

8.♘c3

The best reply, developing a piece while preventing ...a5-a4 for the moment.

8...♘e4

By far Black's most popular choice, but it is also important to consider:

8...♘a6 9.♗b2 ♗f5 10.e3

A very flexible move. White not only strengthens his centre, but also vacates a nice square for his queen. He failed to achieve anything special after 10.♘e5 ♘e4 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.f3 ♗f5 in Calotescu – Popova, Warsaw 2001.

10...♘b4 11.♘e1 dxc4 12.bxc4 e5 13.a3

13.♘a4!? was worthy of consideration.

13...exd4 14.exd4 ♘a6 15.♘f3 ♕b6 16.♘a4 ♕c7 17.♖c1 ♖ad8 18.♕b3 ♘e4 19.♖fe1

White was slightly better in Spassov – Petkov, Bankia 1992.

If 8...♗f5 9.♗b2 ♘e4 we transpose back to the main line.

9.♗b2

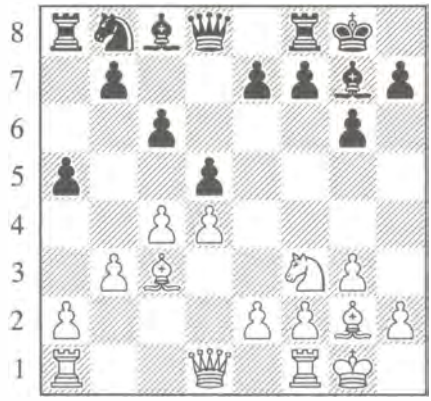


Here we have the following possibilities: **B61) 9...♘xc3** and **B62) 9...♗f5**.

9...a4?! would be premature, as it allows White to establish control over the centre

with 10.♘xa4 dxc4 11.♕c2 cxb3 12.axb3 ♘f6 13.♘e5. The game Korpics – Istvanovszky, Hungary 2006, continued 13...♘bd7 14.♖fd1 ♕c7 15.♘d3 ♘b6, and now the simple 16.♘ac5N ♖xa1 17.♖xa1 ♖d8 18.e4 would leave White with a pleasant edge, thanks to his strong centre.

B61) 9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3



After this exchange, Black has a wide choice: **B611) 10...b5**, **B612) 10...♘d7**, **B613) 10...a4** and **B614) 10...♗f5**.

B611) 10...b5 11.♖c1 ♘d7

If 11...dxc4 12.bxc4 b4 13.♗a1 c5 14.d5 White's chances are clearly preferable, as rightly pointed out by Glek in *Chess Informant 67*.

11...a4, Tsang Hon – Wong Meng, Singapore 1995, should be met by 12.cxb5N cxb5 13.♘e5 ♗e6 14.♘d3 ♘c6 15.e3 ♕d6 16.♗d2, with better chances for White.

12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♗d2!

White's dark-squared bishop is immediately transferred to f4, from where it will support the invasion along the c-file.

13...♗b7 14.♗f4 ♕b6 15.♖c7 ♗c6 16.♕c2 ♖fc8 17.♖c1 ♖xc7 18.♗xc7 ♕xc7 19.♕xc6 ♕xc6 20.♖xc6

The endgame is clearly favourable for White, though Black keeps some chances for a successful defence, Tukmakov – Glek, Biel 1996.

B612) 10...♘d7 11.♖c1



11...♘f6

The alternatives are:

11...e6 12.♕c2 b5 allowed White to obtain easy play along the c-file after 13.cxb5 cxb5 14.♗d2! in Ivkov – Kavalek, Sousse 1967.

11...a4 12.♘d2

12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♗b4!? looks quite interesting.

12...axb3 13.axb3 ♘f6 14.♖a1 ♗f5

Black has a sound position, but the open a-file enables White to keep some initiative.

15.♖xa8 ♕xa8 16.♗b4 ♖e8 17.♕a1 ♕b8

Also in case of 17...♗f8 18.♕b2 followed by 19.♖a1 White's chances are slightly better.

18.♕a3 ♗f8 19.♖a1

White has gained control over the a-file and thus maintained the better chances in Ivkov – Bukic, Budva 1967.

12.♘e5

White has to generate some activity in order to fight for an opening advantage.

12...♗e6

With this natural move Black aims at the c4-pawn, creating some tension in the centre. After 12...♘g4 13.cxd5 cxd5, which occurred in Kanko – Book, Helsinki 1966, White can try 14.♕d3!?N with the idea to place the queen on b5, where it will help to put pressure on Black's queenside. Play might continue 14...♘f6 (Black had better not venture 14...♘xe5?! 15.dxe5 ♗e6, as after 16.♖fd1± his central pawn is falling.) 15.♗d2 (15.♕b5 b6) 15...a4 16.♗b4! and White has definite pressure.

13.♕c2

White maintains control over the e4-square. The following game is thematic for this line.

13...♕b6

If 13...a4 White can consider 14.bxa4!? dxc4 15.♖b1 ♖a7 16.♖fd1 with play on the queenside.

14.♖fd1 ♖fd8 15.e3 ♗f5 16.♕e2 a4

Maybe it was better to refrain from this move.



17.b4! dxc4 18.♘xc4 ♕a6 19.♗f1 ♗e6 20.♗e1 ♗xc4 21.♖xc4±

White has the better chances thanks to his bishop pair, P. Nikolic – Leko, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

B613) 10...a4 11.e3 ♗f5

This position occurred in Tseitlin – Zifroni, Tel Aviv 1996. Now I found an interesting opportunity:



12.cxd5!N cxd5 13.♘e5! ♘c6

Black cannot play 13...axb3?! 14.♕xb3±, when both the b7- and d5-pawns are hanging.

14.bxa4!

Less clear is 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.bxa4 c5!∞.

14...♘xe5 15.dxe5

White's extra pawn is significant.

B614) 10...♗f5 11.e3

This flexible move is a common one in this line. It is important to understand that carrying out the e2-e4 push does not always improve White's position. For instance, 11.♘d2 does not work out well: 11...♘a6 12.e4? (12.♖c1 runs into the unpleasant 12...♘b4!) 12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 c5! and White cannot hold his centre.

11...♘d7 12.♕e2



In this position I would like to consider three options: **B6141) 12...a4**, **B6142) 12...♗e4** and **B6143) 12...♘f6**.

B6141) 12...a4 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♕b5!

Once again we see the queen occupying this important square. This enables the first player to generate definite pressure on the queenside. For instance:

14...axb3 15.axb3 ♕b6 16.♕xb6 ♘xb6

This position has occurred twice in the games of Predrag Nikolic, probably the leading expert in this line. At this point I found a way to improve on his 17.♗a5.



17.♗b4!N

The knight on b6 is currently being dominated by the pawn on b3, so there is no need to chase it away just yet. The following continuation looks pretty logical:

17...♗f6 18.♘e5

Now the d5-pawn is under pressure and Black should watch out for ♗a5 or ♗c5 ideas.

18...♖xa1 19.♖xa1 ♖c8 20.♗c5 ♘d7 21.♘xd7 ♗xd7 22.♖a7 ♗c6 23.b4

White stands clearly better. The plan is 24.♗f1 with the direct threat of b5. Black is doomed to a passive defence, with virtually no chance of achieving any more than a draw.

B6142) 12...♗e4 13.♖fc1

This is an absolutely typical move in positions with a black bishop on e4. White intends to play ♗f1 next, followed by ♘d2, or forcing Black to exchange his bishop for the knight.

Nevertheless, this particular move order allows White an additional option that seems to be worthy of consideration:

13.cxd5!? cxd5

13...♗xd5? is just bad, since after 14.e4 ♗e6 15.♘g5 White obtains a clear advantage.

14.♕b5

We have already seen that this is one of the main ideas behind the e3/♕e2 set-up. In the following game, Black failed to solve his problems:

14...b6 15.♖fc1 ♖a7 16.♗b2 ♕a8

This position was reached in Ionescu – Foisor, Predeal 1997. Here I found a simple and effective improvement.

17.♗a3!?N ♖e8 18.♖c3

This should keep White firmly in control.

13...e6

If 13...♘f6 14.♗f1 we reach a position that will be examined in line B6143.

14.♗f1 ♗xf3

If Black decides to keep the light-squared bishop alive by means of 14...g5 15.♘d2 ♗g6, there is no point in rushing with 16.e4. The problem is revealed after 16...e5! 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.cxd5 cxd5 when Black is doing fine.

Instead White should respond with the calm 16.♗g2±, intending to improve the pieces and later carry out the e3-e4 advance under more favourable circumstance. I rate White's position highly.

15.♕xf3

The arising position is quite typical for this line. Black has a solid but slightly passive position, while White has a clear plan of queenside play. The following example is very instructive:

15...f5 16.cxd5



16...exd5

White now has clear targets for attack on the queenside, but the alternative also does not promise Black a satisfactory game: 16...cxd5 17.♕e2! As usual White's queen is headed for the b5-square. 17...♘f6 18.♕b5 ♖f7 19.♖c2 ♘e4 20.♗e1 ♘d6 21.♕a4 ♖c7 22.♖ac1 ♖xc2 23.♖xc2 White has a pleasant edge.

17.b4 axb4 18.♗xb4!

Of course White recaptures this way in order to keep his bishop active.

18...♖f7 19.a4

White's queenside attack almost plays itself.

19...♘b8 20.a5 ♘a6 21.♗d2 ♗f8 22.♖ab1 ♖a7 23.♗d3 ♗a3 24.♖c2 ♕f8 25.♖b6

White was obviously better in Marin – Hebert, Yerevan 1996.

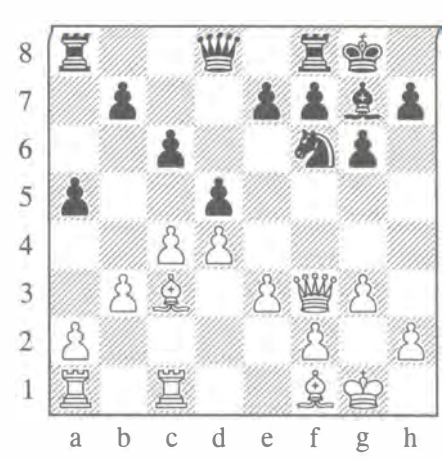
B6143) 12...♘f6 13.♖fc1 ♗e4

White was ready to meet 13...♘e4 with 14.♗e1.

14.♗f1

Once again we see the same thematic idea.

14...♗xf3 15.♕xf3



15...e6

I also checked 15...♘e4. Now apart from the natural 16.♗e1, White gets an additional opportunity in 16.cxd5!? cxd5 (if 16...♘xc3 17.♖xc3 cxd5 18.♖ac1 e6 19.♖c7 ♖b8 20.♕f4 White has unpleasant pressure.) 17.♗e1 and the opening of the c-file seems to be favourable for White. Here is an illustrative line: 17...e5 18.dxe5 ♗xe5 19.♖ab1 ♕d7 20.♕e2 ♖ac8 21.♕d3, with better chances for White.



16.♗d3!

Before starting his play on the queenside White should take the chance to establish control over the e4-square, preventing ...♘e4.

After the natural 16.b4 ♘e4 17.♗e1 axb4 18.♗xb4 ♖e8 19.a4 h5 the game was pretty double-edged in Bu Xiangzhi – Radjabov, Sofia 2008.

16...a4?!

This was Black's choice in Matlak – Kaminski, Lubniewice 1993, the only game I found on the database. Pushing the a-pawn is a thematic and principled idea, but unfortunately for Black it simply does not work as desired, so he should play more solidly. It is hard to give much concrete analysis in that direction, as the play will mainly be characterized by positional manoeuvring. White's position seems easier as he has the clear plan of opening the queenside by advancing the b-pawn at the appropriate moment.

17.b4!N

This looks more challenging than the game continuation of 17.♕d1.

17...dxc4 18.♗xc4 ♘d5 19.♗e1

Naturally White should preserve his bishop pair before continuing with the queenside attack.

19...♕d7 20.b5! cxb5 21.♗xd5 exd5 22.♖c5 ♖fd8 23.♖b1

White has a long-term edge thanks to the better pawn structure. It seems that Black should refrain from 16...a4 and play more patiently. Still, even then Black will still have to come up with a reliable defensive plan against White's standard queenside initiative.

B62) 9...♗f5



10.e3

White can hardly achieve anything after the other options.

10.♘h4 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗e6 and Black is fine.

10.♘e5 ♘a6! with equal chances.

10.♖c1 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗e4 12.e3 This move usually figures in White's plans at some point, which is why I prefer to play it early and keep as many options open as possible. In the present position Black can play 12...a4, getting additional resources along the a-file. This position will be examined after 12.♖c1 in the note to move 12 below.

10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♗e4

After 11...♘d7 12.♕e2 we reach a position that was examined in line B614.

We have arrived at one of the critical positions of the whole variation. After a deep investigation I came to the conclusion that White's best bet for an advantage is a peculiar-looking move.



12.♗h3!

This move has surprisingly only been played once! The following alternatives do not seem to yield anything special.

12.♖c1 a4 13.♗h3 axb3 (13...e6!?) 14.axb3 e6 15.♕e2 was Borovikov – Neverov, Rivne 2005. Now the simple 15...♗xf3!N 16.♕xf3 ♕b6 17.♕d1 ♖a3 would have given Black comfortable play.

White has usually opted for 12.♕e2 but after 12...a4 I failed to find any advantage, for instance: 13.♖fc1 (13.♗h3 c5! 14.♘g5 ♘c6 15.♖ad1 axb3 16.axb3 cxd4 17.exd4 ♕b6=) 13...axb3 14.axb3 ♖xa1 15.♖xa1 c5 16.♕b2 cxd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xd4 18.exd4 ♘c6 and Black equalized comfortably in P. Nikolic – Kempinski, Antalya 2004.

12...c5

Definitely the critical line. We also have:

12...♗xf3 13.♕xf3 e6 14.♖fc1± Such a position almost always favours White slightly, as shown in line B6143 above.

In case of 12...e6 Black should already be on guard after 13.♘e1! threatening to trap the bishop.



13.♖c1!?N

This looks to me like the most challenging move.

Instead the game Neverov – Wu Xibin, Dubai 2008, continued 13.♘g5 ♘c6 14.♖c1 cxd4 15.exd4. At this point Black should have played 15...e6!N 16.♕d2 (or 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.d5 exd5 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.cxd5 ♘e5 20.♕d4 ♕f6 and Black is fine) 16...♕e7 17.♖fe1 ♗h6 18.f4 f5! with equality.

13...cxd4

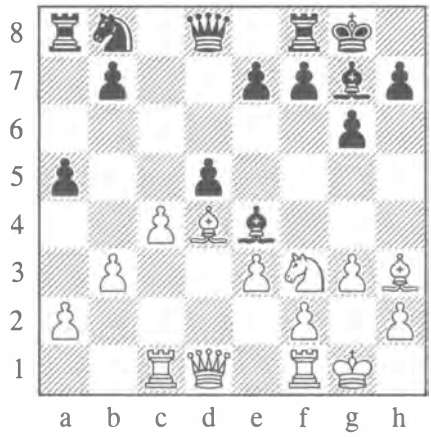
I also examined:

13...♘c6 14.dxc5 ♗xc3 15.♖xc3 dxc4 16.♘d2 ♗d3 17.♖e1 cxb3 18.♕xb3 ♗a6 19.♘c4± and White keeps definite pressure.

13...dxc4 14.bxc4 e6 (Black cannot play 14...♗xf3?! 15.♕xf3 cxd4 in view of 16.♕xb7! winning material) 15.♕e2 White plans to strengthen his position with ♖fd1. 15...cxd4 16.exd4 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 ♗xd4 18.♕xb7 ♖a7 19.♕b2 ♗xc3 20.♕xc3 White's passed pawn, together with Black's weakness on a5, gives the first player the better chances.

14.♗xd4

Black is doing fine after 14.♘xd4 dxc4 15.bxc4 e5 16.♘b5 ♗d3 17.♖e1 ♘c6 with balanced play.



14...dxc4

Black's two other options are:

14...♗xd4 15.♘xd4 e5 (Black has to solve the problem of his light-squared bishop. After 15...♘c6? 16.f3 he loses material.) 16.♘b5 dxc4 17.♖xc4 ♗c6 18.♘c3 ♘a6 19.♗g2! White keeps a slight pull due to the vulnerability of Black's queenside pawns.

14...♘c6 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7

This looks very solid for Black, but unexpectedly White manages to create serious play, again due to the slightly misplaced position of the e4-bishop.

16.♘h4! ♘e5

If 16...dxc4 17.♖xc4 f5 (17...♗d5? is met with 18.♕a1† and the unpleasant 19.♖d1) White manages to pose serious problems with 18.♕a1†! e5 (or 18...♖f6 19.♖d1 ♕b6 20.g4! with some initiative for White) 19.f3 ♗d5 20.♖d1 ♖f7 21.♖c2 (less convincing is 21.♖c5 ♖d7 22.e4 ♗e6 23.♖xd7† ♕xd7 24.exf5 gxf5 25.♗xf5 ♗xf5 26.♖xe5 ♘xe5 27.♕xe5† ♔g8 28.♘xf5 ♖a6!) 21...♖d7 22.♖cd2 ♗e6 23.♖xd7† ♗xd7 24.f4 ♕e7 25.♘f3 and Black is under serious pressure.

17.♕d4 f6 18.cxd5 ♗xd5

18...♕xd5 19.♖c7 also looks quite unpleasant for Black.

19.♖fd1 ♗f3 20.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 21.♘xf3 ♘xf3† 22.♔g2 ♘e5 23.♔f1±

White enjoys a pleasant, long-lasting edge in this endgame, thanks to superiority of his bishop over Black's knight.

15.♗xg7

The best chance. Black equalizes comfortably after: 15.♖xc4 ♘c6 16.♗xg7 ♕xd1 17.♖xd1 ♗xf3 18.♗xf8 ♗xd1 19.♗h6 ♖d8!=

15...♔xg7 16.♘d2!?

This slightly surprising pawn sacrifice allows White to fight for an opening advantage.

16...♗d3 17.♖e1 cxb3

If Black refuses the pawn with 17...♘c6 then White keeps better chances after 18.♘xc4 e5 19.♗f1! ♗xc4 20.♖xc4.



18.♕xb3!

White must not allow Black to take control over the h1-a8 diagonal, as happens after 18.♘xb3 ♗e4!.

18...♘c6

18...♗a6 allows the strong manoeuvre 19.♘e4! ♘c6 20.♘c5, with unpleasant pressure.

19.♗g2

Certainly not 19.♕xb7 ♘b4 and Black is already better, thanks to the dual threats of ...♘xa2 and ...♗a6 followed by ...♘d3.

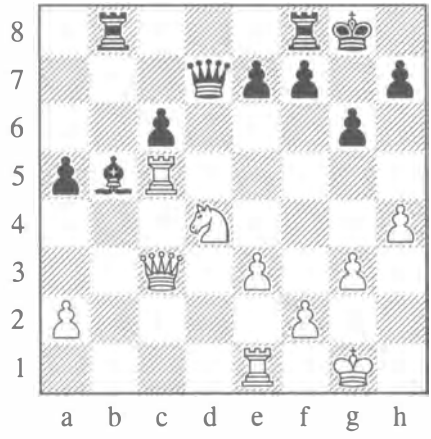
19...♖b8 20.♖c5!?

Another possibility is 20.♕c3† ♔g8 21.♘b3, but here Black has the very strong punch: 21...♘b4! Now after 22.♖ed1 ♘xa2 23.♕a1 ♘xc1 24.♘xc1 ♕b6 25.♘xd3 ♖fd8 we reach a more or less balanced position. White has sufficient compensation for a pawn, but no more.

20...♗a6 21.♕c3† ♔g8 22.♗xc6 bxc6 23.♘b3 ♗b5 24.♘d4 ♕d7

White has some sort of domination and can regain the pawn at any moment. Meanwhile he can try to push his kingside pawns in order to create targets near the black monarch.

25.h4!?



With the idea of 26.h5. I believe White can try to squeeze something from the knight's superiority over the enemy bishop.

B7) 7...dxc4

Not the most popular choice, but in my view a critical one, as Black tries to solve his opening problems by concrete means.

8.bxc4 c5

The point. This is considered one of the most challenging responses to White's set-up.

9.♗b2

Black is doing fine after 9.e3 ♘c6 10.♗b2 ♕b6!.



Now we reach an important crossroads for Black. He can choose between **B71) 9...♕b6** and **B72) 9...cxd4**.

B71) 9...♕b6

This is a serious alternative to the main line.

10.♕b3 ♘fd7

This is Black's first choice according to theory. He has also played:

10...♘e4 11.e3 cxd4

11...♘c6 may well be a better try. In this case White can force favourable simplifications with 12.♘e5 ♘d6 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.dxc5 ♕xc5 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♘d2± retaining some pressure.

12.♗xd4 ♕a6

Black fails to equalize after both 12...♕xb3 13.axb3 ♘c6 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♘d4± and 12...♗xd4 13.exd4 with an edge for White.

13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘d4 ♘c5 15.♕b2 ♕f6

15...f6 does not impress, as after the obvious 16.♘c3! ♕xc4 17.♘d5 White has a powerful initiative.

16.♘c3 e6 17.♕a3 ♘bd7 18.♖ab1±

White was clearly better in P.H. Nielsen – El Kher, Aarhus 1999.

11.♘c3!

White immediately exploits the fact that Black relinquished control over the d5-square.

11...♘c6

In Cuevas – Vargas Maliqueo, Santiago 2007, Black grabbed the central pawn with 11...cxd4 12.♘d5 ♕d8 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♘xd4 e6 15.♘b4 ♘c5 16.♕e3 ♘bd7. Now the simple 17.♖ab1!?N a6 18.♘d3 would have brought White a clear advantage, for instance: 18...♕c7 19.♘c6! bxc6 20.♘xc5±

12.♘d5

Also worthy of consideration was 12.e3!?N. After 12...♘a5 White retains pressure with 13.♕c2 ♘xc4 14.♘d5 ♕xb2 15.♘xe7† ♔h8 16.♕xc4 cxd4 17.♘xd4. And against 12...cxd4 White plays 13.♘xd4, which transposes to a position from the main line B72323.

12...♕xb3 13.axb3 e6

13...cxd4 runs into the unpleasant 14.♗a3! when Black cannot defend his e7-pawn with the rook in view of the ♘c7 fork. Instead he must settle for 14...♗f6 15.♖fd1 when White regains his pawn with an obvious advantage.

14.♘c7 ♖b8 15.e3 a6 16.♖fd1 ♗f6

So far we have been following the game Gyorkos – De Gleria, Koszeg 1997. At this point I found an interesting improvement:



17.♘e1!N

The white knight is headed for c2, from where it will support White's play on the queenside. The following variation is very interesting:

17...cxd4 18.exd4 ♘c5

This is the critical response, but it is not enough to equalize.

19.♖ab1! ♘xb3 20.d5 ♘cd4 21.♘c2 e5 22.♘xd4 ♘xd4 23.♗xd4 exd4 24.♘xa6 ♖a8 25.♘c5

Black has definite problems.

B72) 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4



We reach an important crossroads for the whole line. The main options are **B721)**

10...♘g4, B722) 10...♘c6!? and B723) 10...♕b6, the latter being the clear main line.

A few other options deserve a brief mention:

10...♘a6 11.♘c3 ♘c5 This plan is too slow, as was proven in the following encounter: 12.♘b3 ♘fd7 13.♕c2 ♖b8 14.♖fd1 b6 15.♘b5!± and Black already faced serious problems, Muse – Brkic, Rabac 2004.

10...♘bd7

This is too passive and hardly sufficient for reasonable play.

11.♘d2!

The most accurate move. White's knight is heading for b3. If 11.♘c3 ♘b6! 12.♕d3 ♘fd7 Black gets good counterplay.

11...♘c5 12.♘2b3 ♘fd7 13.♗a3

13.♕c2!? followed by ♖fd1 is worthy of consideration.

13...♘xb3 14.axb3 a6

This was N. Pert – Harikrishna, Edinburgh 2003. Now White could have obtained a clear advantage through simple means.



15.♕d2N ♖e8 16.♖fd1

Black's position is difficult.

10...♘fd7 11.♕c2 ♘c5

The natural improvement here is:

12.♖d1!?N

The inaccurate 12.♘b3 allowed Black to develop his bishop with tempo with 12...♗f5!. The tactical justification was revealed after 13.e4 ♗xe4! 14.♗xe4 ♗xb2 15.♘xc5 ♗xa1 16.♗xb7 ♕c7 17.♗xa8 ♕xc5 with equal chances, Goudriaan – Pruijssers, Hoogeveen 2006.

12...♗d7 13.♘c3 ♘ba6 14.♖ab1

White has definite pressure on the queenside.

B721) 10...♘g4 11.e3

It is necessary for White to fortify the position of his knight.

11...♘a6

11...♘e5 12.♕c2 ♘a6

Here I recommend a natural move:

13.♘d2N

Instead of 13.♖d1 ♕b6 14.♗a3 ♘c5 15.♘d2 ♕a5 16.♗xc5 ♕xc5 when Black obtained reasonable play, Iotov – Gochev, Borovets 2008.

13...♘b4

13...♘c5 14.♘2b3 ♘a4 15.♗a3 ♕c7 16.♖ac1 ♖e8 17.c5! brings White an advantage.

14.♕b3 ♘bd3 15.♗a3±

Black's knights are unstable.

12.♘d2



12...♘c5

Black has also tried:

12...♘e5

Now I propose exerting pressure on the queenside with:

13.♖b1!?N

White failed to achieve any advantage after 13.♕e2 ♗g4! 14.f3 ♗d7 15.♘2b3 ♖c8 in Tarrio – Strikovic, Benidorm 1992.

13...♖b8 14.♕a4 ♘d3

14...♗d7 15.♕a3±

15.♗a3 ♗d7 16.♕c2 ♘dc5 17.♘2b3

White stands better.

13.♘2b3

It is obvious that Black's strategy has failed. His pieces lack coordination and his knight on g4 is misplaced.

13...♘xb3

This appears to be the lesser evil. White has much better chances after 13...♘a4 14.♗a3 ♕c7 15.♖c1 a6 16.c5!± Hartoch – J. Horvath, Haarlem 1995.

14.axb3 a6 15.♕e2

White enjoys a pleasant, risk-free advantage, Strikovic – Mozetic, Banja Vrucica 1991.

B722) 10...♘c6!?



Technically this seems to be a new move here, although I found one example on my database where the same position arose through a different move order. Still it is interesting and poses White a real challenge.

11.♘xc6 bxc6

I propose the following solution:

12.♘d2N

Not the most exciting novelty, but White still retains some nagging pressure thanks to his active light-squared bishop. It is not a great deal, but the position is certainly easier to play as White.

The main justification of Black's idea is seen after:

12.♗xc6

This allows the second player to become very active.

12...♖b8 13.♗e5 ♗h3! 14.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 15.♗xb8

Another line runs 15.♗g2 ♗xg2 16.♔xg2 ♖bc8 17.♘a3 ♖d2 18.♔f3. Here Black has several good options, my own preference being 18...♖c5 19.♗f4 ♖f5! when he is at least not worse.

15...♗xf1 16.♘a3 ♗xe2 17.♗xa7 ♘g4!

Black had sufficient compensation for the pawn, Inarkiev – Sutovsky, Kallithea 2008.

12...♕c7

The most natural reply. Other options seem to be worse:

12...♖b8 13.♗e5 ♖b6 14.♘b3 ♕xd1 15.♖fxd1 The arising endgame is very unpleasant for Black. For example: 15...♘g4 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.c5 ♖a6 18.a4! with serious pressure due to Black's misplaced rook.

12...♗f5?! does not offer Black any compensation for the pawn after 13.♗xc6 ♖c8 14.♗f3.

13.♗c3!?

Quite a flexible move. White keeps all his options open, he can either continue with ♕a4 or ♘b3, while ♘f3 might also be a possibility in some lines. Meanwhile it is always useful to clear the b-file.

I failed to find anything special for White after 13.♕a4 ♗d7 14.♘b3 c5 15.♕a3 ♖ac8.

13...♖b8

I also examined 13...♗e6 14.♕a4 ♖ac8 15.c5!?, which seems to me pretty promising for White, for example 15...♘d5 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♘f3 followed by 18.♘d4.

14.♕a4 c5 15.♖ab1

Black still has to solve some very concrete problems, and it is not so easy. Here is a possible example of how the game might continue:

15...♗f5 16.♖b5! ♘d7 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♘b3 ♖fc8



19.♖c1±

White intends to increase his pressure with ♖a5. It should be noted that Black cannot solve his problems with concrete play:

19...♖xb5 20.cxb5 c4 21.♘d4 ♘b6 22.♕a3

The position has become more dangerous for Black.

B723) 10...♕b6

This is Black's principal choice, and in my opinion the most challenging continuation, at least when followed up correctly.

11.♕b3

11.♕c2 is considered to be harmless because of: 11...♘c6 12.♘xc6 (12.c5 should be met with 12...♕a6 13.♖d1 ♗d7, followed by ...♖ac8 with comfortable play) 12...bxc6 13.♘d2 ♗f5! 14.♕b3 ♖fd8 with equality, Malakhov – Svidler, Krasnoyarsk 2003.



Now Black normally chooses between the following lines: **B7231) 11...♘bd7** and **B7232) 11...♘fd7**.

11...♘a6 is likely to transpose to B7231 after 12.♘d2 ♘c5 13.♕a3.

B7231) 11...♘bd7

This allows White to develop his pieces comfortably.

12.♘d2 ♘c5 13.♕a3 ♗d7

13...e5

This is positionally dubious as it obstructs Black's best minor piece, his dark-squared bishop.

14.♘4b3 ♘fd7 15.♗c3 ♘xb3

This was played in P. Nikolic – Markos, Berlin 2009. Here White could improve with simple moves:



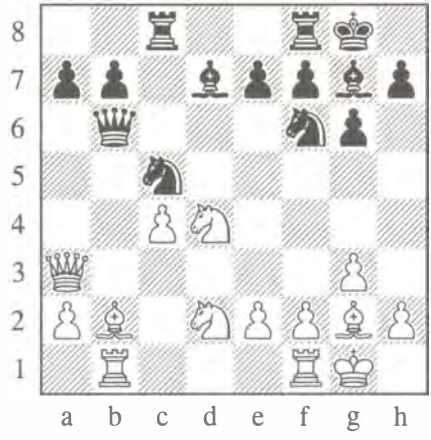
16.axb3N ♘b8 17.♕a5 ♕xa5 18.♖xa5±

White has an indisputable advantage.

14.♖ab1

There is no reason to rush with 14.♘4b3, when 14...♘xb3 15.axb3 ♗c6 gives Black a reasonable position.

14...♖ac8



15.♗c3!?N

An improvement over 15.♘4b3 ♘xb3 16.axb3 ♖fd8 17.♗c3 ♗c6= Malich – Seul, Germany 1995.

15...♕c7 16.♘b5 ♗xb5 17.cxb5±

Black has a solid position, nevertheless White's bishop pair secures him a slight but long-lasting edge.

B7232) 11...♘fd7

The most critical continuation.



12.e3

The most accurate. Instead Black is absolutely fine after 12.♖d1 ♘c6 13.e3 ♘c5!.

Here Black has tried: **B72321) 12...♘c5**, **B72322) 12...♘a6** and **B72323) 12...♘c6**.

B72321) 12...♘c5

I only found a single game featuring this move, in which White missed the most challenging response.

13.♕a3!N

Far better than 13.♖xb6 axb6 14.♘c3 e6 15.♖ab1 ♘bd7 with equality, Carlier – Cvitan, Cappelle la Grande 1996. Black's activity fully compensates for his double pawns.

13...♘a4

This may have been the move that concerned White.

I also examined:

13...♘c6 14.♗c3!

A nice prophylactic move; White not only defends against a possible ...♘b4 jump, but also removes his bishop from its exposed location. This could have become relevant after 14.♘d2 ♘e6! 15.♖ab1 ♘exd4 16.♗xd4 ♕c7 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7, reaching a position in which White's pressure is already not so strong.

The main justification of the text move is seen after:

14...♘xd4?!

Black would be better off looking for some other way to relieve the pressure.

15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.exd4 ♘e6 17.c5!

White keeps a nice advantage.



14.♗c3!

Black is quite alright after 14.♕xa4 ♕xb2 15.♘a3 ♗xd4 16.♖ab1 ♕xa2 17.exd4 ♘c6. The text is much stronger.

14...♘xc3 15.♘xc3 ♗xd4

Black had better accept the invitation, otherwise White will easily develop his initiative at no material cost.

16.exd4 ♕xd4

White's initiative is obviously strong and fully compensates for the pawn deficit. The following line shows the potential pitfalls into which Black might easily stumble.

17.♖ad1 ♕xc4 18.♖fe1 e6?! 19.♘e4 ♘c6

Now White can break the defence by utilizing the long diagonal.

20.♘f6† ♔g7 21.♕b2! e5 22.♖xe5!

The point. Black is completely busted.

22...♕b4 23.♕a1! ♘xe5 24.♕xe5

White's attack should decide the game.

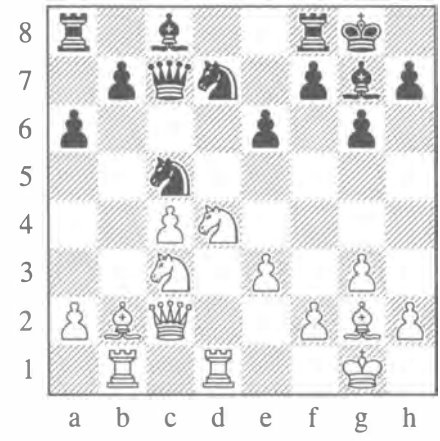
B72322) 12...♘a6

This natural development appears a bit too slow. White will be able to arrange his pieces in an optimal way.

13.♘c3 ♘ac5 14.♕c2 e6

Otherwise ♘d5 would be very strong.

15.♖ab1 a6 16.♖fd1 ♕c7



This position arose in Bloemhard – Muhren, Dieren 2001. It seems to me that White could have increased his initiative with natural play.

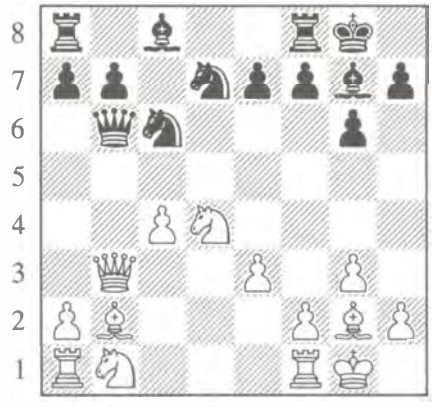
17.♗a3!N ♖e8 18.♘b3!

Black's position is hard to defend, for example:

18...♖b8 19.♘xc5 ♘xc5 20.♘a4 ♗f8 21.♘xc5 ♗xc5 22.♕a4 ♖f8 23.♗xc5 ♕xc5 24.♕b4±

The difference between the power of the light-squared bishops should tell.

B72323) 12...♘c6



13.♘c3!!N

A very important novelty. White sacrifices a pawn in return for long-term pressure against Black's queenside. It is very difficult for Black to solve the problems connected with the passivity of his light-squared bishop.

It should be mentioned that after 13.♕xb6?! ♘xb6 it is Black who has slightly better chances.

13...♘xd4

Another interesting line is 13...♘a5 14.♕c2. Now White keeps definite pressure after both 14...♘e5 15.♘d5 ♕d8 16.c5 ♘ac4 17.♖ab1± and 14...♘xc4 15.♘d5 ♕xb2 16.♘xe7† ♔h8 17.♕xc4 ♘b6 18.♕c5±.

14.exd4 ♕xb3

It is also possible to take the d4-pawn with the queen:

14...♕xd4

However, this is obviously riskier.

15.♖ad1 ♕f6

15...♕b6 does not change the assessment. After 16.♘d5 ♕d8 17.♕a3! ♖e8 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.c5± it is hard to deal with the threat of ♘b6.



16.♖d2!

A calm move that prepares a knight jump to d5. Black has serious concerns in the face of White's idea. For instance:

16...♕g5 17.♖fd1 ♘b6

17...♘c5 18.♕a3! is very annoying for Black.

18.♘d5 ♘xd5 19.♖xd5 e5 20.f4

White regains the pawn while maintaining the pressure. The position is highly unpleasant for Black.

15.axb3 ♗xd4 16.♖fd1



16...♗g7

One of the key points is that Black cannot defend his bishop with the natural-looking 16...e5? due to 17.♖xd4! exd4 18.♘d5±. Strangely, there is no satisfactory defence against White's threats.

Another important option is:

16...♗f6 17.♖a2!

White needs to protect his bishop in order to make the most of the knight's agility.

17...♔g7 18.♘d5 ♗xb2 19.♖xb2 ♘e5

If 19...e6, then 20.♘e7! ♘f6 21.♖a1 and White will regain the pawn under favourable circumstances.



20.♖a1!

White can regain the pawn with 20.♘xe7, but after 20...♗g4 Black gets enough counterplay to equalize.

20...♘c6 21.b4 ♗d7 22.b5 ♘e5 23.♘e3⩲

White has strong pressure on the queenside, which provides full compensation for his minimal material deficit.

17.♖a2

White plays in the same way as we saw after 16...♗f6. In my opinion he has very interesting compensation for the pawn. Here is an approximate line that shows how difficult Black's defensive task might become.

17...e6 18.♘e4 ♗xb2 19.♖xb2 ♘e5

Another line runs 19...♔g7 20.♘d6 ♘e5 21.f4 ♘c6 22.b4 ♖b8 23.b5 ♘e7 24.c5 and Black is in serious trouble.

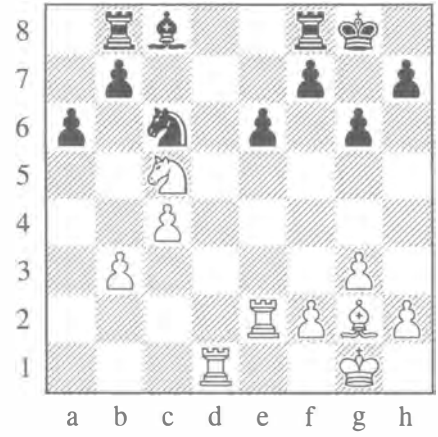
20.♖a2 a6

20...a5 21.♘c5! (but not 21.♖da1 ♖d8! with counterplay) 21...♖a7 22.♖d6 ♔g7 23.♖e2 ♘g4 24.♖b6 does not offer Black any relief either.

21.♖e2

White's rook has nothing further to do on the a-file, so it is time to switch to the centre.

21...♘c6 22.♘c5 ♖b8



Here White has the option of 23.♗xc6 bxc6 24.♖d6 ♖b6 25.♖e3, with significant compensation. However, I do not think it is necessary to start cashing in on the positional advantages yet and thus recommend a less forcing move.

23.♖d6!?⩱

White has powerful compensation. The only question is if Black can hold the position or not. What is certain is that he is doomed to a long and hard defence in the endgame.

Conclusion:

In general Black cannot rely on the sidelines in the Benko Gambit (or perhaps just for one game as a surprise weapon) as White has clear-cut routes to an advantage in almost every case. The only exception might be 9...♘fd7, where further investigation is definitely required.

In the main lines of the Benko, I hope that I have managed to find some good ideas and at this point the situation looks promising for White in the 10.♖b1 line. In my opinion the 13...♘g4 variation is a critical test for White. According to my analysis the final evaluation is rather favourable for White; nevertheless it would be interesting to see a practical test.

Chapter 21

King's Indian

6...♗g4



Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♗g4

7.h3

note to 10...e5



11.h4!N

after 15...♗xf6



16.♕d3!?N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3

Besides all the main moves, it is important to know how to face the following tricky line:

6...♗g4 7.h3

As a general rule, the most challenging reaction to a bishop on g4 will be to play h3 to provoke the exchange on f3. After 7.0–0 I discovered (for me it was new!) an interesting and reliable line for Black in 7...♕c8!?.

One notable exception to the aforementioned rule occurs after 6...♘c6 7.0–0 ♗g4, when 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘d7 seems quite reliable for Black, That is why in Chapter 22 I instead recommend 8.d5.

Before we start exploring any variations, I will mention one important nuance. In the present variation, the fact that White has not yet castled can make it quite attractive for him to advance his h-pawn in certain positions. For this reason, White should refrain from castling prematurely and instead look for other ways to strengthen his position.

7...♗xf3 8.♗xf3 ♘c6

8...c6 9.0–0 ♘bd7 10.e4 transposes to the 6...c6 variation (Chapter 27).

9.e3



9...♘d7

The most popular move. Black has also tried:

9...e5 10.d5 ♘e7

The drawback to this idea is that White is not obliged to waste time with ♗f3-g2, as happens in the main line.

11.e4 ♘d7 12.h4!

A typical idea in these positions. White's chances are much better, as was demonstrated in the following example:

12...h5 13.g4 hxg4 14.♗xg4 f5

Sergeev – Likavsky, Bratislava 1996. Now White should have kept his bishop on the h3-c8 diagonal:

15.♗h3!N ♘f6 16.♗g5!

Premature would be 16.exf5?! ♘xf5! with decent play for Black. The text, on the other hand, maintains all the pluses of White's position.

10.♗g2 e5

Once Black tried :

10...a5

Sakaev – Mrva, Istanbul 2000. Once again White can try a familiar idea:



11.h4!N h5

Preventing the further advance, but this approach brings other problems.

If 11...♘b6 12.♕e2 e6 White can retain the better chances with 13.♖b1! intending to meet 13...d5 with 14.b3.

12.0–0 e5 13.d5 ♘b4 14.e4

White stands better in this complex middlegame. In view of the kingside structure, Black will find it difficult to execute the typical ...f7-f5 advance in a favourable way.

11.d5 ♘e7 12.e4 f5 13.h4!

Once again White does not rush to castle, and can instead aim to profit from the position of the king's rook.

13...♘f6 14.♗g5

This helps to increase the pressure on the kingside, while at the same time provoking the weakening ...h7-h6 advance.

14...h6

In Shumiakina – Szczepkowska, Stockholm 2008, Black tried 14...a6, at which point I offer the following improvement: 15.h5!N ♘xh5 16.exf5 ♖xf5 17.♕d2 ♖f8 18.♗h3 and White has powerful compensation for the pawn.

15.♗xf6 ♗xf6

This position was reached in Portisch – Sznapik, Amsterdam 1984.



16.♕d3!?N

The game continuation of 16.h5 ♗g5 17.hxg6 f4 was less convincing. The text is an improvement, which by the way was also mentioned by Stohl in his annotations.

16...h5

I also examined 16...c5. In this case I believe White should open up the position by means of 17.dxc6! bxc6 18.h5 with better chances. What I especially like here is the flexibility of the white position. Depending on the circumstances, he still has the freedom to castle on either side.

17.0–0–0

I prefer this to 17.exf5 gxf5! (Worse is 17...♘xf5 18.0–0–0 when Black has a strategically difficult position, as White has full control over the key e4-square.) 18.♕e2 e4 19.♕xh5 c6 and Black has definite compensation, with strong play on the dark squares.

17...♗g7 18.♔b1

I believe White has the much more promising position. He can increase the pressure on Black's pawn structure by ♗h3, followed by exf5 at a suitable moment, and can also prepare f3 and g4 opening up the kingside. Meanwhile it is not at all easy for Black to obtain any significant activity on the opposite flank.

Conclusion:

Black can hardly hope to equalize by exchanging his bishop for the enemy knight in the early stages. The fact that White has not yet castled improves his chances even more, and we have seen repeatedly how troublesome a well timed h4-h5 can be for the defender.





King's Indian

6...♘c6 & 7...♗g4

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♗g4

8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2 c5

A) 10...♕d7 372
B) 10...e5 373
C) 10...a6 11.h3 ♗d7 12.b3 b5 13.♗b2 ♖b8 14.♖ab1 375
C1) 14...bxc4 375
C2) 14...♕c7 376
C3) 14...e5 377

note to 8...♘a5



15.b4N

A) after 14...fxe6



15.♘ce4!N

B) after 16...f5



17.fxe5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♗g4

I had never considered this move seriously, but in fact it is Black's fourth most popular option and there are 989 games with it in Mega Database 2009!

8.d5

I believe this is the most challenging choice. Before writing the book, I was pretty sure White had a simple route to an advantage with 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘d7 10.e3, but after studying the position more closely I concluded that after 10...e5 11.d5 ♘e7 12.e4 f5 White's bishop pair is not so significant, as the position is closed and it is not easy to activate his light-squared bishop.

8...♘a5

This is clearly Black's main choice, but there is also 8...♗xf3 when 9.exf3! leads to a favourable position for White. His bishop pair is the most significant detail, and Black's e7-pawn is a permanent target for White's heavy pieces. (In contrast, 9.♗xf3 would be a serious error, as after 9...♘e5 both White's light-squared bishop and the c4-pawn are vulnerable.) After 9.exf3! we should consider the following options:

a) 9...♘e5 10.♕e2 ♖e8 11.f4 ♘ed7 12.♗e3

This is a dream position, as Black has no activity while White can slowly improve his position all over the board. 12...a5 13.♘b5 ♖b8 14.♖ad1 ♘b6 15.b3 ♘fd7 16.h4 White was already much better and after the inaccurate 16...h5? 17.f5 he had a decisive attack in Andersson – Lucena, Brasilia 1981.

b) 9...♘b8

Here I recommend:

10.♕b3!?

The main point is to disrupt Black's intended plan of 10...c6 followed by ...cxd5. Now Black can play either 10...b6, which looks very suspicious as it weakens the light the squares, or he can defend with the queen:

10...♕c8 11.f4 ♘a6

If Black returns to the ...c7-c6 plan then White is ready: 11...c6 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.♗e3 cxd5 14.cxd5 ♘a6 15.♖ac1 The black queen is misplaced on c8. 15...♕d7 16.♘b5±

12.♗e3 b6

12...♘g4 obviously runs into 13.♗h3! and again Black is hurt by his queen's location.

13.a3 ♘c5 14.♕c2 a5



In Izeta Txabarri – Fernandez Ramos, Leon 1998, it was obvious White is clearly better, especially after Black's ...b7-b6 and now I suggest a simple move:

15.b4N ♘a6 16.♖ab1

White has a huge positional advantage.

c) 9...♘a5 10.♕d3

Also good is 10.♕e2.

10...c5

10...♘d7 11.b3 does not change much.

11.♗d2 a6 12.b3 ♕c7

More natural-looking is 12...♖b8, but after 13.♖ac1 b5 14.♘d1 White is in control.

13.f4 ♖fb8 14.♖ac1 b5 15.♘d1!

This is White's main positional idea in this line.

15...bxc4 16.bxc4

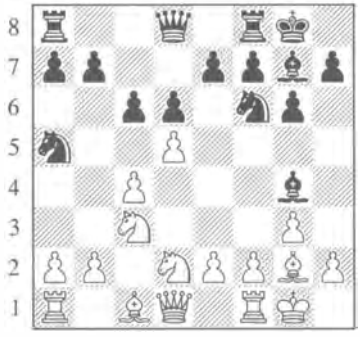
White is clearly better, as Black can hardly create counterplay on the queenside because

he is tied to defending his knight on a5, while White can slowly build his play on the kingside and in the centre, Krogius – Kraidman, Bad Liebenzell 1996.

9.♘d2 c5

The other c-pawn move is not really playable after the following forcing line:

9...c6



10.b4 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♗xc3 12.♖b1 ♗xd2 13.♗xd2 ♘c4 14.♗h6

In view of the threat of 15.♕d4 Black has to give up an exchange, and he fails to obtain adequate compensation.

14...♕b6

The text is Black's best chance.

Instead I faced 14...♘e5 15.♗xf8 ♕xf8 in the game Avrukh – Ezat, Dresden (ol) 2008. Now I went wrong with 16.h3, when instead I had at least two strong options. Firstly, there was 16.dxc6!N when 16...bxc6 17.♖c1 leads to a clear edge. Secondly, I could even have taken the second exchange with 16.f4 ♘c4 17.♕d3 cxd5 18.♗xd5 b5 19.♗xa8 ♕xa8. During the game I was worried about this position, but White is much better after the correct 20.e4 ♕c6 21.♕d4!±.

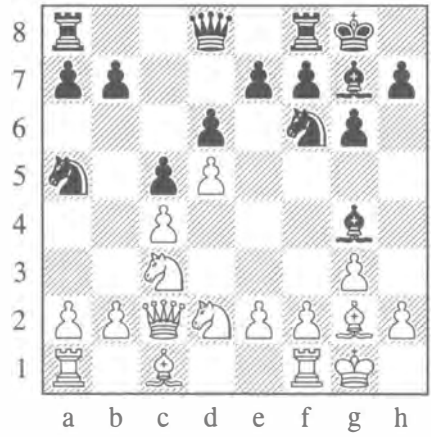
15.♗xf8 ♖xf8 16.a4

16.♖c1 ♘e5 17.♕d2 looks even stronger.

16...♗d7 17.♕d3 ♘e5 18.a5! ♕c7 19.♕c3

White was clearly better in Blagojevic – Mujic, Tuzla 1990.

10.♕c2



This move seems more flexible than 10.h3, which is also popular. I chose to recommend the 10.♕c2 line after comparing it with the main line of the Yugoslav variation, 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 a6 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2 c5 10.♕c2. The difference looks rather symbolic at first: we have a black bishop on g4, while in the other line Black has played ...a7-a6. In fact, Black's position in the Yugoslav variation is slightly dubious from a positional point of view, but Black manages to get his play going move by move with 10...♖b8 11.b3 b5 12.♗b2 bxc4 13.bxc4 ♗h6, and so on. In our position Black needs to spend one more tempo to create his typical queenside play, and this tempo turns out to be vital as Black fails to create the same level of activity as in the main line of the Yugoslav variation.

Black has three main moves to consider: **A) 10...♕d7**, **B) 10...e5** and **C) 10...a6**.

A) 10...♕d7 11.b3 ♗h3 12.♗b2 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 e5

In our lines we generally avoid very closed positions, so:

14.dxe6 fxe6

The other recapture is also possible:

14...♕xe6

Now White keeps control over the key d5-square with the help of a tactical trick:

15.♘d5! ♖ad8

Obviously Black cannot touch the white knight: 15...♘xd5 16.cxd5 ♕xd5† (no better is 16...♕xe2 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕c3† followed by 19.♕xa5) 17.e4 Black is helpless against the coming 18.♗xg7, 19.♕c3† and ♕xa5.

16.e3 ♘c6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♖ad1±

White retains a pleasant edge, thanks to his grip on d5.



15.♘ce4!N

This move is more challenging than 15.♖ad1, as was played in Bilek – Taimanov, Kapfenberg 1970, when Black equalized (and drew) after 15...♘c6 16.♘f3 ♖ad8 17.♘e4 ♘b4 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♕d2 ♕g7 20.♗xf6 ♕xf6 21.a3 ♘c6 22.♕e3 ♕f5.

15...♘c6 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 18.♘e4

Now the big question is whether White can build up pressure against Black's central pawns. In my opinion White has good chances of success. For example:

18...♖f7 19.♖ad1 ♘d4 20.♕d3 ♕c6 21.b4!

The idea is to drive away the black queen from c6 with b4-b5, when White will also be restricting the black knight, as its only remaining retreat square will be f5.

21...♖d8 22.b5 ♕c7 23.♘g5 ♖f6

Instead 23...♖f5 is just a waste of time after 24.f4, when the black rook is on a square that the d4-knight needs.

24.e3 ♘f5 25.f4 d5 26.g4 ♘g7

This position has been reached by a more or less forced sequence. Now I found a very strong idea:



27.e4! ♖xf4

The main point is that after 27...h6 28.e5 ♖ff8 29.♘xe6! ♘xe6 30.♕xg6† ♘g7 31.cxd5 White has a winning position.

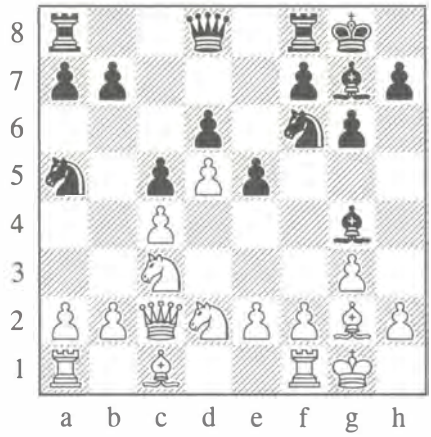
28.♕g3 e5

28...♖df8 does not help Black after 29.♖xf4 ♕xf4 30.♕xf4 ♖xf4 31.♔g3 and next White will regain the pawn and keep a clear advantage.

29.♕h4 h5 30.♖xf4 exf4 31.gxh5 gxh5 32.exd5

White is clearly better.

B) 10...e5



11.b3 ♕d7

Several times Black has opted for:

11...a6

Here I developed the following line for White:

12.♗b2 b5 13.♖ae1

In general, White's plan includes e2-e4, ♘d1-e3 and eventually f2-f4, starting to play in the centre.

13...♖b8

A possible alternative for Black is: 13...♗d7 14.e4 ♘g4 15.f3 (It is worth briefly considering the following game: 15.♘d1 f5 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.♗e4 ♗d7 18.♗g2 ♘b7 19.h3 ♘f6 20.♘e3 ♕c7 21.f4 exf4 22.♖xf4 ♖ae8 23.♕d3 ♕d8 24.♖ff1 b4 25.♗a1 ♗c8 26.♔f2 ½–½ Arsovic – Todorovic, Belgrade 2008. White's move order allowed the black knight to retreat from g4 to a sensible square on f6.) 15...♘h6 The knight must go to h6 to keep the possibility of ...f7-f5. This is Tregubov – Gavrilov, St Petersburg 1994, and now White should have started the previously mentioned plan with 16.♘d1N and if 16...f5 17.f4 then White is much better prepared for a central confrontation, due to Black's poorly placed knight.

14.♘d1 ♕c8

This is Stippekohl – Volkmer, Germany 1993, and now White could have initiated favourable complication with:



15.f4!N exf4

White is positionally better after 15...♖e8 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.♘f2 ♘b7 18.♘d3.

16.♖xf4

Or 16.gxf4 also leads to a promising position, but the text is stronger.

16...♘h5 17.♗xg7 ♘xg7

Black cannot recapture with his king due to 18.♕c3† followed by ♕xa5.

18.♘e4 f5

Black's position is very difficult after 18...♘e8 19.♕d2 ♘b7 20.♖ef1±.

19.♘xd6 ♕d7 20.♕d2 b4

If 20...♕xd6 then 21.♕xa5 and Black has no compensation for the pawn after, say, 21...♘h5 22.♖f2.

21.♖xg4! fxg4 22.♘e4 ♘b7 23.♘df2±

White has fantastic compensation for the exchange.

12.♗b2 ♗h3

This plan is quite logical; first Black trades light-squared bishops and then he intends to start his play on the kingside. Here I discovered a surprising idea:

13.♘ce4!?

After the natural 13.e4 Black obtains a rather solid position: 13...♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♘h5 15.♘e2 b6 16.♖ae1 ♗h6 17.♕c3 f6 18.♔h1 ♖ae8 19.f4 ♕g4 20.♕f3 ♕xf3† 21.♘xf3 a6 White had nothing special in Velikov – Velimirovic, Dubai (ol) 1986.

13...♗xg2

Black has a couple of alternatives we should look at in passing:

13...♗f5 14.♘xf6† ♗xf6 15.e4 ♗h3 16.f4 is clearly better for White.

13...♘xe4 14.♗xh3! The main point of White's idea. 14...♕xh3 15.♘xe4 White wins an important tempo by attacking the d6-pawn. 15...♕d7 16.f4 White seizes the initiative, using the fact that Black cannot play 16...f5 in view of ♘g5-e6.

14.♘xf6† ♗xf6 15.♔xg2 ♗g7 16.f4 f5

This position was reached in the game S. Webb – Nicholson, Britain (ch) 1975. It is very important for the evaluation of White's idea. I found an interesting novelty:



17.fxe5!N dxe5 18.e4 b6

Black would like to get his knight into the game via the b7-square, but he has no time for this.

19.exf5 gxf5 20.♘f3

White immediately attacks the e5-pawn.

20...♖ae8 21.♖ae1 e4 22.♘g5

White is clearly better, as his knight will be strong on e6.

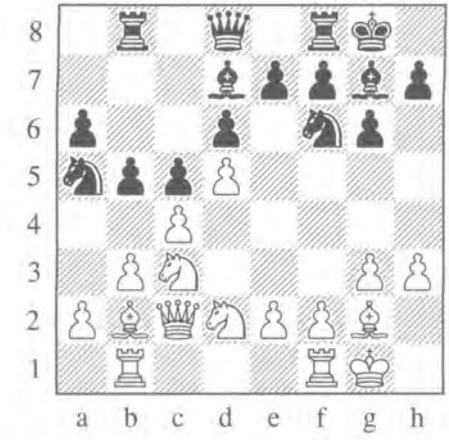
C) 10...a6

This is Black's main plan; obviously he is trying to play on the queenside.

11.h3 ♗d7 12.b3 b5 13.♗b2 ♖b8

Another option is 13...bxc4 14.bxc4 ♖b8 15.♖ab1! which will be examined in line C1.

14.♖ab1



Now Black has three main lines: **C1) 14...bxc4**, **C2) 14...♕c7** and **C3) 14...e5**.

Less important is 14...h5, as in Feller – Sebenik, Szeged 2007, and now I like 15.e4!?N, as after 15...♕c8 16.♔h2 h4 White can simply grab the pawn with 17.gxh4.

C1) 14...bxc4 15.bxc4 e5

Black has also tried:

15...♗h6

This is a thematic idea in the main line of the Yugoslav variation, but here it falls short.

16.f4 e5

There is also 16...♘h5 17.♔h2 e5 18.dxe6! fxe6 19.♘ce4 ♕e7 as in Velikov – Lenz, Graz 1987, and here White has the simple 20.♕d3 ♘b7 21.♗c3 ♗c6 22.♖b6 with a near decisive advantage.

17.dxe6 ♗xe6 18.♘d5

White plays by analogy with the main line of the Yugoslav variation; the big difference is that Black does not have the chance to play 18...♖xb2.

18...♗xd5 19.cxd5 ♗g7

This is N. Davies – F. Rayner, Wrexham 1994, and now I suggest a new move:



20.♗c3N

White has a clear advantage, as Black has problems coordinating his pieces.

16.dxe6 fxe6

After 16...♗xe6 the play might continue: 17.♘d5 ♖xb2 18.♖xb2 ♘xc4 19.♘xf6† ♕xf6 20.♘xc4 ♗xc4 21.♖b6 Black failed to find sufficient compensation for the exchange in I. Almasi – Zsinka, Hungary 2004.

17.♘ce4 ♖xb2

Another important line goes 17...♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♗xb2 19.♖xb2 ♖xb2 20.♕xb2 ♘xc4 21.♕c3! d5 22.♘xc5 and White is clearly better.

18.♖xb2 ♘xe4 19.♘xe4 ♘xc4

19...♗xb2 20.♕xb2 would lead to the 17...♘xe4 line mentioned above.

20.♖b3 ♘a5 21.♖d3

This is clearly better for White.

C2) 14...♕c7



15.e4 e6

Black has also tried several other moves here:

15...♖b7

In Wojtkiewicz – Docx, Antwerp 1994, Black's idea was to double rooks on the b-file. White should continue with:



16.♘e2N ♖fb8 17.♗c3!

This is the best arrangement of White's minor pieces in most cases. It is important for White to keep an eye on Black's knight, as this is a key idea in restricting Black's activity on the queenside.

17...bxc4 18.bxc4 ♖xb1 19.♖xb1 ♖xb1† 20.♕xb1 ♘e8 21.♕b2 ♗xc3 22.♕xc3 ♘b7 23.f4

Black is doomed to a passive defence.

15...bxc4 16.bxc4 ♖b6 was tried in Schwartzman – Gretarsson, USA 1990, and we already know White should meet this plan with 17.♘e2 ♖fb8 18.♗c3±.

15...e5 16.♘e2

16.dxe6 fxe6! is very unclear.

16...♘h5 17.f4 bxc4 18.bxc4 ♗h6

I also examined an interesting temporary exchange sacrifice: 18...♖xb2 19.♖xb2 exf4 20.gxf4 ♗xb2 21.♕xb2 ♖e8 White cannot stop ...f7-f5, but he has a good strategic idea at his disposal: 22.♔h2 f5 23.♘g3! Black's kingside becomes vulnerable after the exchange of a pair of knights. 23...♘xg3 24.♔xg3 White is better, and now his main positional idea is to penetrate along the b-file with ♖b1 and ♕b6.

19.♗c3 ♖xb1 20.♕xb1 f6 21.♕b2

Threatening ♕a3.

21...♘b7 22.♔h2!

A nice positional move; the king protects the h3- and g3-pawns and thus creates the additional idea of ♗f3 attacking Black's knight. The game we are following is Krogius – Ozsvath, Budapest 1965.

22...exf4?!

Obviously Black should not release the tension, but White would still be better after any of Black's range of neutral moves.

23.♘xf4 ♘xf4 24.gxf4 ♗g7 25.f5

White has a clear positional advantage.

16.♘d1!

The knight is heading for e3, where it will be perfectly placed if Black plays ...exd5.

16...♖fc8

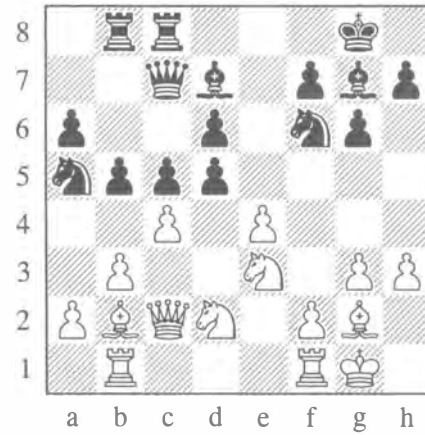
In two other games Black immediately released the tension in the centre, but in both cases he failed to equalize: 16...bxc4 17.bxc4 exd5 18.cxd5 ♖fe8 19.♘e3 ♖b4 20.♗c3 ♗a4 21.♕c1 ♖xb1 22.♕xb1 Now the games diverged:

22...♘d7 23.♕a1 ♗xc3 24.♕xc3 f6 25.♖b1 ♔g7 26.♗f1± Black failed to create any counterplay and his minor pieces are clearly misplaced on a4 and a5. White was much better in Stangl – Gretarsson, Reykjavik 1993.

Black has also tried 22...♗b5 23.♖c1 ♘h5, but White created a dangerous attack after 24.♗xg7 ♘xg7 25.♘g4! ♘h5 26.♕b2!± in Wl. Schmidt – Troianescu, Poland 1971.

17.♘e3 exd5

This is Tkachiev – Krstic, Croatia 2002, and now I believe it is always desirable for White to recapture with the c-pawn. Probably White overlooked that after:



18.cxd5!N c4

He has a strong answer:

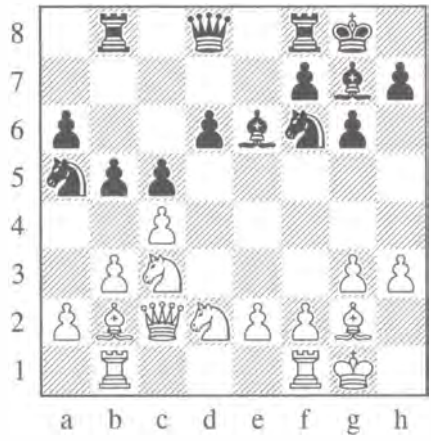
19.♖fc1!

This would secure White's advantage.

C3) 14...e5 15.dxe6 ♗xe6

The obvious alternative is 15...fxe6. Now the critical line runs 16.♘ce4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♗xb2 18.♖xb2 ♗c6 19.♖bb1 ♕e7 as in Unzicker – Kavalek, Lugano (ol) 1970. Now in my opinion White could retain the better chances with 20.♖fd1, as Black is far from

solving the problem of his misplaced knight on a5. For example, 20...♗xe4 21.♕xe4 ♖b6 22.♕d3 ♖d8 23.cxb5 ♖xb5 (or 23...axb5 24.b4!) 24.♖bc1 d5 25.e4 d4 26.e5 with an advantage.



16.cxb5

I like this move, as instead after 16.♘d5 ♗xd5N 17.cxd5 ♖e8 Black's position looks pretty reliable to me.

16...axb5 17.♖fd1

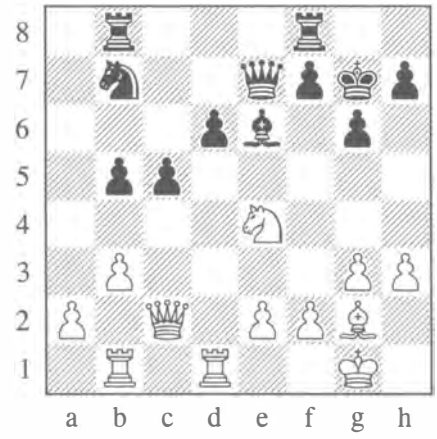
The main idea is to prepare ♘de4 under favourable circumstances. White has also tried 17.♖bd1, but I think the text is more natural.

17...♕e7

The main point is that Black is unable to play 17...d5, as after 18.♘de4 his centre collapses.

18.♘de4 ♘xe4 19.♘xe4 ♘b7 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7

Now I have an improvement over Marin – Florean, Romania (ch) 1996, where White opted for 21.♘c3:



21.b4!N c4

White should not be afraid of 21...♗f5 as 22.bxc5 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♘xc5 24.♗c6! wins a pawn.

22.♘c3

White has a clear positional advantage, as Black has still not solved the problem of his bad knight.

Conclusion:

The 6...♘c6 7.0–0 ♗g4 variation is more popular than I had at first realized, but White can keep a pleasant edge by following the lines I recommend. One point to note is how often (particularly after d5xe6 ...f7xe6) the key move for White is ♘ce4.

Chapter 23

King's Indian

6...♘c6 & 7...♗f5



Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♗f5

8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2

A) 9...c6 **380**

B) 9...c5 **381**

A) note to 10...♘xd5



18.♘a5N

A) after 14...♕xa5



15.♖e1!N

B) after 15...h5



16.♘c1!?N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♗f5

I was surprised to discover that this move had been played for the first time by Boris Spassky back in 1955. Nowadays it is a rare guest in high level tournaments, although I have to mention that it has been played regularly by Ilya Smirin, a leading King's Indian expert.

8.d5

This is by far White's most popular reply and undoubtedly the most critical one.

8...♘a5

It looks senseless to retreat passively with the knight.

8...♘b8?! 9.♘d4 ♗d7 10.h3 c5 11.♘c2

We have reached a version of the Benoni that is clearly favourable for White.

11...♘a6 12.e4 ♘c7 13.a4 e5

Black has a very passive position, and his last move, an attempt to gain some space in the centre, fails to bring any relief.

14.dxe6! ♗xe6 15.♕d3 ♘fe8 16.♗e3 ♕c8 17.♔h2 ♗d7 18.♖ad1±

White had a clear positional advantage in Xu Jun – Mencinger, Portoroz 1987.

9.♘d2

The other main option is 9.♘d4 ♗d7 intending 10...c5 after White defends the c4-pawn. It is a reasonable line for White, but I prefer the text.



Now Black must make an important choice between **A) 9...c6** and **B) 9...c5**.

A) 9...c6

With this move Black invites complications, and White should accept the challenge.

10.b4!

This principled move has not been so popular, but it is definitely the right way to fight for the advantage. Black has scored well against less ambitious moves such as 10.e4.

10...♘xd5

This has been played in most of the games, but we should also consider:

10...♘xc4 11.♘xc4

Obviously the most ambitious reaction. Black gets a normal position after 11.dxc6 ♘xd2 12.cxb7 ♖b8 13.♗xd2 d5 14.♕b3 ♖xb7, Danielian – Fierro Baquero, Istanbul 2009.

11...♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♗xa1

Black has insufficient compensation after 12...cxd5 13.♘b2 e6 14.a4! ♖c8 15.♖a3 with ♘d3 to follow.

13.♗h6 ♗g7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♘de3 ♗e6

After a more or less forced sequence, we arrive at a rather unbalanced position. From a materialistic point of view Black is absolutely fine, but I believe that in this concrete situation White's two minor pieces are stronger than Black's rook and two pawns, as the rooks will have a hard time becoming active any time soon. Another important detail is the absence of dark-squared bishops, which makes Black's kingside slightly more vulnerable.

16.a4 ♗xc4 17.♘xc4 d5

This position occurred in P.H. Nielsen – Nataf, Reykjavik (blitz) 2004. Now White should have played actively with:



18.♘a5N ♕c7

Black certainly cannot play 18...♖b8? in view of 19.♕d4† followed by 20.♕xa7.

White is also better after 18...♕b6 19.♕d2 e5 20.♘b3.

19.♕d2 ♖fd8 20.♖c1 e6 21.♕c3† ♔g8

It is too dangerous for Black to try: 21...e5?! 22.b5 c5 23.f4! ♔g8 24.fxe5 c4 25.♘b3!±

22.♘b3 ♖ac8 23.♘c5

Black is very passive, while White can prepare the e2-e4 advance under favourable circumstances.

11.cxd5 ♗xc3 12.e4 ♗xa1

Also 12...♗d7 does not bring Black satisfaction: 13.♖b1 ♗xd2 14.♗xd2 ♘c4 15.♗h6 b5 16.♕d4 f6 17.♗xf8 ♔xf8 18.a4!± Krogius – Shagalovich, Soviet Union 1967.

13.exf5 ♗g7

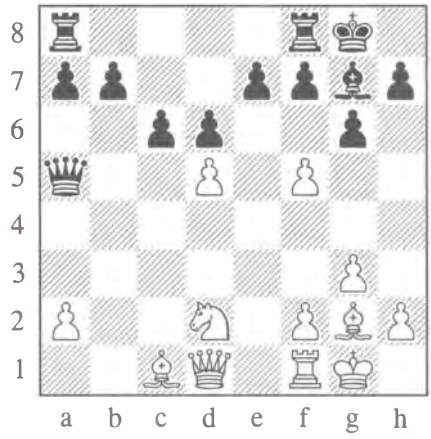
The alternative 13...cxd5?! is hardly playable for Black. The game U. Nielsen – Hvenekilde, Denmark 1993, continued 14.bxa5 e6 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♘b3 ♗g7 17.♘d4 ♗xd4 18.♕xd4. With simple and natural moves White got a winning position.

14.bxa5

This straightforward capture is much stronger than 14.♖e1?! cxd5 15.bxa5 gxf5 16.♗xd5 ♕xa5 17.♘c4 ♕c7 with an unclear and double-edged game, Ivanchuk – Smirin, Odessa 2007.

The text move was originally a novelty of mine, although it was played early in 2010, shortly before publication.

14...♕xa5



15.♖e1!N

In Nakauchi – Ly, Sydney 2010, White tried the enterprising but ultimately incorrect 15.fxg6 hxg6 16.♕b3?! cxd5 17.♗xd5 e6 18.♗xe6?! fxe6 19.♕xe6† and although he eventually won, his position at this stage is far from convincing.

After the simple rook development White's position seems very promising, as shown by the following illustrative line:

15...♕c7 16.♘f3 ♖ac8 17.fxg6 hxg6 18.dxc6 bxc6 19.♕a4!

White has serious attacking prospects, the principal threat being ♕h4 and ♘g5.

B) 9...c5 10.e4

As a general rule, I regard most of the positions with a black knight on a5 as slightly dubious for the second player, with the exception of the main line of the Yugoslav variation. Nevertheless Black still keeps plenty of tactical chances, as is customary for this opening, so we must always remain on guard.

10...♗d7

Another option is:

10...♗g4 11.♕c2



Now Black has a choice:

a) 11...♕c8 12.b3 ♗h3 This is not a dangerous idea, and it allows White additional time to mobilize his forces. 13.♗b2 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 b6 This position has occurred a few times in practice and I do not see anything wrong with the natural: 15.f4N The following line looks very convincing to me: 15...e5 16.♖ae1 exf4 17.♘e2 ♘g4 18.♘xf4 ♗xb2 19.♕xb2 ♘e5 20.♘f3 With better chances for White. As usual, Black's misplaced knight on the edge of the board is the prevailing factor.

b) 11...♕d7 12.b3 h5 13.♗b2 a6?! Of course it is hardly a good idea to combine Black's previous two moves, but still it is useful to observe White's play. 14.f4 h4 15.e5 ♗f5 16.♘ce4 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 hxg3 18.hxg3 ♕c7 This position was reached in P.H. Nielsen – Kaabi, Cappelle la Grande 2001, and now White could have won a pawn with a simple tactic: 19.exd6N exd6 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 (Black is certainly not helped by 20...♗xe4 21.♕c3) 21.♕c3† f6 22.♘xd6! ♕xd6 23.♕xa5 with a winning position.

c) 11...a6 12.b3 b5 13.♗b2 actually reaches a position from the 7...♗g4 variation with the extra move e2-e4 for White, which is obviously favourable for him. 13...♖b8 14.♖ab1 White begins a standard regrouping. 14...♗d7 15.♘d1 bxc4 16.bxc4 ♖b4 17.♗c3 ♗a4 18.♕c1 ♕b6?! Black tries to get some activity on the queenside even at the cost of an exchange, but it is hardly sufficient. 19.♗xb4 cxb4 20.♘b2 ♗d7 21.♘d3± White was much better in Neckar – Lorenz, Leipzig 1971.

11.♕c2 a6

Black can also choose a closed type of position, but this also brings him little relief.

11...e5 12.b3 ♘g4 13.♗b2 f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♘e2

Now I think Black should play

15...♘f6

Actually this position might arise after 12...♘h5 as well.

16.♖ae1

White is much better mobilized for a central confrontation.

16...a6

This position occurred, via a different order of moves, in the game Osnos – Vasiukov, Kiev 1964. Now I found a strong improvement.



17.♘f3!N

The knight intends to disrupt the black position by moving either to g5, or to h4.

17...b5

Black should try to get some play on the queenside.

I also examined the modest 17...h6 18.♘h4 ♘h7 at which point I like the following solution: 19.f4! e4 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♘c3! Now White has a natural positional plan of ♘d1-e3 followed by ♗h3 and perhaps g4, or even a sacrifice on f5 depending on circumstances. White is clearly better.

18.♘g5 bxc4 19.bxc4 ♕c8

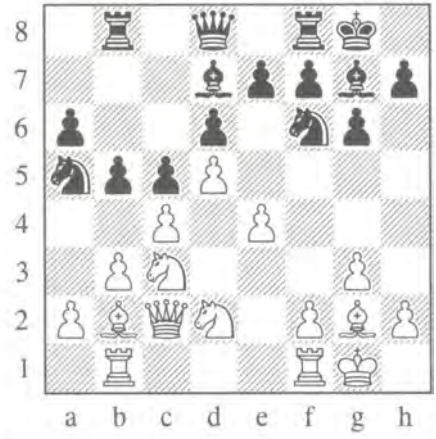
Also important is: 19...♖b8 20.♘e6 ♗xe6 21.dxe6 ♕e7 22.♗d5 ♘xd5 23.cxd5 ♕b7 24.♗c3 ♘c4 25.♕d3 ♘b2 (25...♘b6 runs into the strong 26.♖b1! when 26...♕xd5? is impossible due to 27.♕xa6 and Black loses his knight.) 26.♗xb2 e4 27.♕c4 ♗xb2 28.♖b1 ♕b5 29.♕c2 White is clearly better.

20.f4 e4 21.g4!

Fully exploiting the fact that Black cannot play 21...♘xg4, when White has 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.♕c3† followed by 24.♕xa5.

21...♖b8 22.gxf5 ♖b4 23.♗c3 ♖xc4 24.♕d2 White is much better.

12.b3 b5 13.♗b2 ♖b8 14.♖ab1



14...e5

Black has several other options.

14...h5 15.♘e2 e5 (After 15...h4 White can simply grab the pawn with 16.gxh4 as was shown convincingly in the following encounter: 16...bxc4 17.bxc4 ♖xb2 18.♖xb2 ♘h5 19.♖bb1 e6 20.♘f3± Matveeva – Kachiani Gersinska, Bled 2002.) 16.dxe6 ♗xe6 17.♘f4 ♗d7 Lemos – Orsini, La Plata 2008. Now I found a strong regrouping:



18.♖fd1N ♘c6 19.♘f1! ♘e8 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♘e3 ♘d4 22.♕b2 ♔g8 23.♘e2 ♘xe2† 24.♕xe2 with a clear positional advantage.

14...bxc4 15.bxc4 ♕c7

The alternative is 15...♗h6, but here White gets an advantage by simple means. 16.f4 e5 was P.H. Nielsen – Pedersen, Denmark 2001. Now I believe White should have played the simple 17.dxe6N fxe6 (17...♗xe6 18.♘d5!±) 18.♕d3 ♗c6 19.♘f3 and White's pieces are much better placed, for instance: 19...♖b4 20.♗h3 ♖e8 21.e5 ♘h5 22.a3 ♖xc4 23.exd6±

16.♘d1

Also worthy of consideration is the thematic 16.♘e2 e5 17.♗c3.

16...e5 17.♘e3 ♗h6 18.♗c3!

Underlining the poor position of Black's knight.

18...♖xb1 19.♖xb1 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 ♘g4 21.♖e1 ♘b7 22.h3 ♘f6 23.♖b1!

Correctly switching to the queenside.

23...♘h5 24.♔h2 ♗c8 25.♘f3 ♕e7 26.♖b6 a5 27.♕d1

White obviously has the initiative, Aronian – Blehm, Yerevan 1999.

15.♘e2

This is perhaps the critical position of the whole line. Black has several possibilities.



15...h5

This is a typical idea, preparing ...h4 and ...hxg3. This has nothing to do with a crazy kingside attack, but is in fact a prophylactic positional concept. The point is that White's entire position is geared towards the f2-f4 break. If the h-pawns are removed from the board, then this move immediately becomes much less attractive as the enemy knight will obtain a valuable outpost on g4.

Naturally some other moves have been tried as well.

15...♘h5 16.f4 ♗g4

The exchange sacrifice on b2 is not so effective: 16...bxc4 17.bxc4 ♖xb2 18.♖xb2 exf4 19.♘xf4 ♗xb2 20.♕xb2±

17.♗f3 ♗xf3 18.♘xf3 bxc4

The passive 18...f6 leads to a difficult position for Black after 19.f5!.

19.fxe5! cxb3 20.axb3 dxe5 21.♗xe5 ♖c8 22.♗xg7 ♘xg7

This position was reached in Rogozenko – Lanka, Hamburg 2008. Now I suggest:

23.♕c3N c4 24.b4 ♘b3 25.♘ed4±

White keeps a clear positional advantage.

15...♘g4

This is another natural try. Black intends to carry out ...f7-f5 immediately, while the knight can always drop back to h6 and perhaps later f7.

16.h3 ♘h6 17.f4 f5

We have been following the game Koneru – Jobava, Wijk aan Zee 2006. Now I believe White should react quickly, not allowing Black to consolidate his position with moves like ...♕c7, ...♘b7 and ...♖ae8.



18.fxe5N

I believe this is the right moment to release the tension.

18...dxe5 19.♘c1!

This thematic manoeuvre works very well here. The knight is heading for d3, where it will be perfectly placed attacking the pawns on e5 and c5. I analysed the following continuation:

19...♕g5

The idea to activate Black's knight via the f5-square is insufficient: 19...fxe4 20.♖xf8† ♕xf8 21.♘xe4 ♘f5 22.♕c3!±

20.♖f3

More complicated is 20.♘d3 ♕xg3 21.♖f3 ♕g5 22.♘xc5 ♗c8 when Black has definite counterplay.

20...♘f7 21.♘d3 ♘b7 22.♖e1 ♖fe8 23.h4 ♕e7 24.♖f2±

White keeps the better chances, as Black's centre is vulnerable.

15...♕e7 16.♖be1

Premature would be 16.f4?! ♘g4 17.♕d3 bxc4 18.bxc4 ♖xb2! 19.♖xb2 exf4 with great compensation for the exchange.

16...♘h5 17.♗c3

It is essential to remove the bishop from b2 in order to avoid a possible exchange sacrifice on b2.

17...b4 18.♗b2 f5

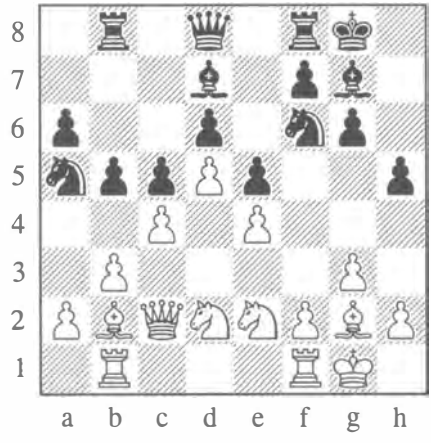
If 18...g5 White can surprisingly generate play on the queenside by means of 19.a3! bxa3 20.♗c3 ♘b7 21.♖a1 with better chances.

19.f4 exf4

If 19...♖be8, then Huschenbeth in *ChessBase Magazine 121* gives the following line: 20.♗h3 exf4 21.♘xf4 ♘xf4 22.gxf4 fxe4 23.♗xd7 ♕xd7 24.♘xe4 ♘b7 25.♔h1! with advantage to White, thanks to the strong idea of ♘g5-e6.

20.♘xf4 ♘xf4 21.gxf4 fxe4 22.♘xe4 ♗f5 23.♕d2 ♗xb2 24.♕xb2 ♗xe4 25.♖xe4 ♕g7 26.♕xg7† ♔xg7 27.f5!? gxf5 28.♖e7† ♖f7 29.♖xf7† ♔xf7 30.♗e4!

The endgame was unpleasant for Black thanks to his inferior minor piece, Sargissian – Huschenbeth, Kemer 2007.



16.♘c1!?N

After a deep investigation I decided to recommend this novel idea. It seems to me that the knight on e2 is currently White's worst placed piece, but if we reposition it on d3, then it suddenly becomes one of the best!

Before we look any further, I will share my findings on the other possibilities, so you can see why I felt a new approach was needed.

16.♗c3 has been the most popular choice. 16...h4 17.♕d3 White's idea is to cover the e3-square, taking the sting out of the potential ...♘g4 jump. However, the idea is a little slow and allows Black to regroup his pieces: 17...b4 18.♗b2 ♘b7 19.f4 hxg3 20.hxg3 ♘g4 with unclear play, Akopian – Prusikhin, Bad Wiessee 2001.

Another natural option is:

16.f4!?N

This is the move White would ideally like to play. I worked a lot on this position and discovered the following line, which provides quite an instructive demonstration of Black's resources.

16...exf4 17.gxf4 bxc4 18.bxc4 ♖xb2!

White should always be on the lookout for this thematic sacrifice.

19.♖xb2 ♘g4

Threatening to jump to e3.

20.♖f3 ♕h4 21.h3

Black also has a great position after 21.♖b6 ♗d4†! 22.♘xd4 ♕xh2† 23.♔f1 cxd4 24.♕d3 ♘e3† 25.♖xe3 dxe3 26.♕xe3 ♖c8.

21...♕e1† 22.♗f1



22...♘e3!! 23.♖xe3 ♗d4

The position remains complicated, but Black is certainly not worse.

16...h4 17.♘d3

White is now ready to carry out the desirable f4 advance. Another advantage of the knight manoeuvre to d3 is that the possible ...♘g4 idea can now be met comfortably by ♖be1 covering e3.

17...♘h5

This is directed against f2-f4. Instead after 17...♘g4 18.h3 ♘h6 19.f4! White's position looks very nice.



18.b4!?

Here we see a further advantage of the knight manoeuvre: White created an additional opportunity to get play on the queenside.

18...♘xc4

Another interesting line is 18...cxb4 19.c5 ♖c8 20.c6 ♘xc6 21.dxc6 ♖xc6, but despite the approximate material balance I prefer White's position after 22.♕d1 a5 23.♘b3±.

19.bxc5 ♘xb2 20.♕xb2

Obviously the queen should vacate the c-file, preventing a potential pin after ...♖c8.

20...dxc5 21.♘xc5 ♖c8 22.♖fc1



Black is very much in the game, but I believe White's chances are better, due to his queenside pressure and passed d-pawn. The latter is likely to become increasingly important after more pieces are exchanged.

Conclusion:

Line A with 9...c6 is certainly tricky, but ultimately it seems that White can emerge from the complications with better chances in the positions with two minor pieces against a rook. Variation B with 9...c5 leads to semi-closed positions demanding more subtle manoeuvring. Despite the absence of an immediate tactical confrontation, a great deal of tension lies under the surface of the position. To take one example, we saw in the note to White's 16th move how effectively the black pieces may spring into action if given the opportunity. It will be interesting to see my new idea with 16.♘c1!? tested in practice, but at this stage all I can say is it looks promising for White.

Chapter 24

King's Indian

6...♘c6 & 7...e5



Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 e5

8.d5 ♘e7 9.e4

A) 9...c5 10.♘e1 ♘e8 11.♘d3 f5 12.f4 exf4 13.♗xf4 389
A1) 13...fxe4 389
A2) 13...♗d4† 390
B) 9...a5 391
C) 9...h6 391
D) 9...♘d7 393
E) 9...♘e8 10.♘e1 f5 11.♘d3 ♘f6 12.♗g5! 395
E1) 12...fxe4 395
E2) 12...h6 13.♗xf6 396
E21) 13...♗xf6 397
E22) 13...♖xf6 398

A) after 16...♕b6



17.a4!N

E1) after 22...♗d7



23.♖af1!N

E22) after 17...♗e5



18.♖ad1!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 e5

What could be more natural than Black's last move? After 8.d5 ♘e7 the play resembles the Classical line of the King's Indian (where the bishop is on e2). Recently this variation has rarely been seen in high level chess, mainly because Black fails to create the kingside attacks that often arise in the Classical lines, and the positional battle tends to favour White. Nevertheless, as always in the King's Indian, Black has many ideas for counterplay. However, it is likely that this is not Black's most promising variation.

8.d5 ♘e7

There is a minor alternative to cover before we reach the real tabiya:

8...♘a5 9.♘d2 c5

Positionally dubious is 9...b6?! 10.b4 ♘b7 as the knight looks horrible on b7. I like the following example: 11.♗b2 ♘e8 12.♖c1 a5 13.a3 ♖b8 It is hard to explain this move, but White was much better anyway with the black knight so badly placed on b7. 14.♘b5 ♗d7 15.♘a7! In Volodin – Rezak, Slovakia 2000, White transferred his knight to c6 and obtained a clear advantage.



I found no fewer than 520 games in *Mega Database* where this position was reached. The funny thing is that usually it appears via a different move order and White's next move would be illegal.

10.dxc6!

This is the point; now White gains strong pressure against the d6-pawn.

10...♘xc6

Of course 10...bxc6? is impossible due to 11.b4 followed by 12.♗xc6.

11.♘de4 ♘e8

Black can also try 11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♘d4, but after: 13.e3 ♘f5 14.b3 ♗e6 15.♕d2 ♕b6 (or 15...d5 16.cxd5 ♗xd5 17.♕xd5 ♕xd5 18.♘f6† ♗xf6 19.♗xd5 is clearly better for White) as in Dizdar – Matkovic, Makarska 1994, White could have secured a positional plus with 16.♗a3 ♖fd8 17.♘g5.

12.♘b5!

Immediately attacking Black's weakness.

12...♘d4 13.♗g5!

An important intermezzo.

13...f6 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♗f4 ♗e6

Little is changed by 15...f5 16.♘g5 ♘c7 17.♕b3! ♗e5 as in Vasic – Dimovska, Tivat 2001, and here 18.c5† ♔g7 19.♖ac1± would give White a large advantage.

16.c5! d5 17.♘d6

White was much better in Medic – Stanic, Zagreb 1993.

9.e4



This is the tabiya of our lines against the 7...e5 variation. Another popular continuation

is 9.c5 ♘e8 10.cxd6 ♘xd6, but I find 9.e4 more promising.

Black now has a huge choice. The lines we will study are: **A) 9...c5**, **B) 9...a5**, **C) 9...h6**, **D) 9...♘d7** and **E) 9...♘e8**.

One less critical option is:

9...♗g4

This move has appeared many times in practice. The idea is to provoke White into playing h2-h3, which might weaken the white king's position, but it is simpler just to get rid of Black's light-squared bishop.

10.♕b3!

I think this is a very nice idea. The queen steps out of the pin and prepares the ♘e1-d3 manoeuvre.

10...♕c8

The alternative is: 10...b6 11.♘e1 ♕c8 12.♘d3 ♗h3 13.♗d2 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♘h5 15.♖ae1 ♕d7 16.♕a4! Obviously a queen exchange favours White, as Black's minor pieces are very passive. 16...♕xa4 17.♘xa4 f5 18.♘c3 ♘f6 19.f4 Opening up the position is clearly in White's favour, due to the weakness of the e6-square. 19...♘d7 20.♘b5 ♖fc8 This is Marin – De Dios Alija, Benasque 1998, and now 21.fxe5N ♘xe5 22.♘xe5 ♗xe5 23.♗g5! would have given White a solid advantage.

11.♘e1 ♗h3 12.♘d3 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2

In my opinion this type of position is favourable for White, as it is much easier for him to develop an initiative on the queenside than it is for Black to create activity on the kingside. An important detail is that Black needs several tempos to solve the problem of his rather passive knight on e7.

13...b6 14.♕c2 ♘h5 15.♗d2 f5 16.f3!

It is important not to allow Black to play ...fxe4 followed by ...♘f5, activating his knight.

16...a5 17.a3 h6

White is also clearly better after 17...♔h8 18.b4 ♘g8 19.c5±.

18.b4 g5 19.♘f2!

An essential prophylactic measure; if 19.c5 g4 and Black finds some activity.

19...axb4 20.axb4 ♕d7 21.♖xa8 ♖xa8 22.♖b1

White was better in Illescas Cordoba – J. Polgar, Moscow (ol) 1994.

A) 9...c5

Obviously this move helps Black to establish control over the d4-square, especially if the position opens up, but at the same time it weakens the d6-pawn, which might be an important detail in the long term. The play usually continues:

10.♘e1 ♘e8 11.♘d3 f5 12.f4 exf4 13.♗xf4

Now Black has a choice:



The split is between **A1) 13...fxe4** and **A2) 13...♗d4†**.

A1) 13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♘f5

The alternative is 14...h6 when the following idea looks quite impressive: 15.♗d2! The white bishop is heading for c3 with the obvious intention of trading for its opposite number, and thus making Black's kingside vulnerable.

It is no less important that the f4-square is vacated for White's knight. Black has a couple of likely replies:

a) 15...♘f5 16.♗c3 ♗xc3

Black cannot safely avoid the exchange of bishops. If 16...♘d4 17.♖xf8† he would face concrete problems. For example: 17...♗xf8 18.♗xd4 cxd4 19.♘f4 ♗f5 20.♘e6 ♗xe6 21.dxe6± or 17...♔xf8 18.♘f4 ♗f5 19.g4!±

17.bxc3!

White covers the d4-square and now Black has to deal with White's idea of g3-g4, pushing away the knight from f5.

17...♘eg7

Not good enough, but still more tenacious was: 17...♘f6 18.♘xf6† ♖xf6 19.♕d2 ♔g7 20.♖ae1±

18.♕d2 g5

In Marin – J. Gonzalez, Badalona 1995, White could have decided the game with:



19.g4!N ♘h4 20.♖xf8† ♕xf8 21.♖f1 ♕e7 22.♕e2!

Threatening 23.♘f6†.

22...♔h8 23.♖f6+–

b) 15...♖xf1† 16.♕xf1 ♗f5 17.♖e1 ♕d7 18.♕e2! ♗g4 19.♘exc5! A well-calculated tactical operation. 19...♗xe2 20.♘xd7 ♗xd3 21.♖xe7 ♗xc4 22.b3 ♗d3 23.♗h3 White was clearly better in Filippov – Loginov, Elista 2001.

15.♕d2 b5

A very challenging move. White would be much better after 15...♘f6 16.♘g5 ♘h5 17.♘e6 ♗xe6 18.dxe6 ♗d4† 19.♔h1 ♘xf4 20.♘xf4 ♘e3 21.♖fe1± and the e6-pawn makes a difference.

16.cxb5 ♕b6



This is Marin – Piera, La Pobla de Lillet 1997, and now I found a nice little improvement:

17.a4!N a6 18.g4!

Not so clear is 18.♘g5 c4† 19.♘f2 axb5.

18...♘d4 19.♗h6!

White has every chance of building a dangerous offensive. For example:

19...♗xg4 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7

Or 20...♘xg7 21.a5 ♕xb5 22.♘xd6 ♕b8 23.♘e4±.

21.♖xf8 ♔xf8 22.♕h6† ♔g8 23.♘g5 ♖a7 24.♖e1 ♘f6 25.♘xh7! ♖xh7 26.♕xg6† ♖g7 27.♕xf6

With a winning attack.

A2) 13...♗d4† 14.♔h1 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 fxe4 16.♗xe4N

This natural recapture is a new move. Instead White has tried 16.♘f2 and of course it would be nice to recapture on e4 with the knight, but unfortunately Black has a strong exchange sacrifice: 16...♖xf4! 17.gxf4 e3 18.♘e4 ♘f5∓ Black had fine compensation in Mamedyarov – Guliev, Baku 2006.

16...♗f5 17.♗f3 ♕d7 18.♘f2

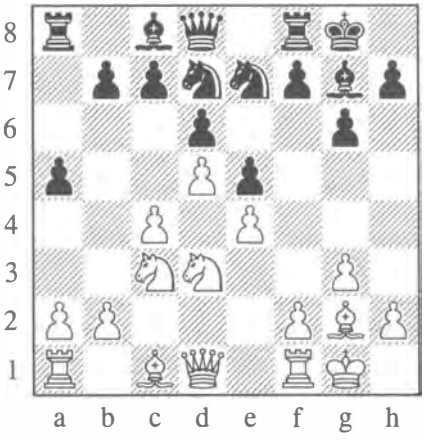
White's chances are clearly preferable due to his bishop pair.

B) 9...a5 10.♘e1 ♘d7

This position might also be reached via the 9...♘d7 move order.

11.♘d3

And now I found the following idea quite an interesting one:



11...b6!?

The alternative 11...f5 does not really combine well with 9...a5, so it is no surprise White is better after 12.f4. Luch – Rodriguez Fernandez, Oviedo 2007, continued: 12...♔h8 13.fxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗g5 ♗d7 16.♕d2 ♕e8 17.♖ae1 ♘g8 And now the straightforward 18.exf5N ♖xf5 19.♗f4! would secure White's plus. For example, 19...♕e7 20.♗xe5† dxe5 (or 20...♖xe5 21.♖xe5 ♕xe5 22.♖f7 ♘f6 23.♕h6 ♖g8 24.h3 and Black is almost paralysed) 21.♘e4±.

12.a4!?

A very surprising move in this kind of King's Indian position, and yet I think this is White's best bet of gaining an advantage. The main point is that White is actually not interested in playing on the queenside; instead he is concentrating on carrying out the f2-f4 advance. The text move helps prevent Black becoming active on the queenside, for instance with ...a4-a3 in reply to f2-f4. Also ...♗a6 could now be met with the blocking ♘b5.

The following game shows some of the black ideas we are trying to avoid: 12.f4 exf4 13.♗xf4 ♗a6 14.♘b5 In Tregubov – Motylev, St Petersburg 1998, Black should have played 14...♘c5N 15.♘xc5 bxc5 16.♕d2 ♗xb5 17.cxb5 a4! with counterplay.

12...f5 13.f4

Opening up the position is clearly in White favour. For example:

13...♘c5

I also examined other options for Black. For example, 13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 exf4 15.♘xf4 ♘c5 16.♘g5 gives White a good initiative, and 13...♗a6, as I already mentioned, is well met by 14.♘b5.

14.fxe5 ♘xd3 15.♕xd3 ♗xe5 16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.♕d2±

White has easy and active play, while Black is doomed to passivity, Matamoros Franco – Garrido Dominguez, Seville 2004.

C) 9...h6 10.♘e1

Now I examined Black's two most popular moves in this position.



10...♘d7

10...♘h7

Now I believe the critical continuation is:

11.f4

11.♘d3 allows 11...g5 12.f4 exf4 13.gxf4 ♘g6, which gave Black reasonable play in Unzicker – Manor, Budapest 1994.

11...f5

If 11...exf4 12.gxf4 f5 then White has the important resource 13.e5! exploiting the hanging h6-pawn. Then 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xh6 ♖e8 16.♘f3 ♗f6 17.♕d2 is much better for White.

12.♘d3 exf4

This is McCart – Jovanovic, Australia 2001, and now White should have recaptured with the knight:

13.♘xf4N

And if:

13...fxe4 14.♗xe4 ♘g5 15.♗g2

White has the better chances.

11.♘d3 f5 12.♗d2!?

This is probably the only moment in this line where White will not meet Black's ...f7-f5 with an immediate f2-f4. The main reason is that Black is optimally prepared for a clash in the centre. On the other hand, it is essential to understand that White's position is flexible and he can allow himself to delay the advance of his f-pawn.

I will briefly show some lines that demonstrate why the immediate f2-f4 is not best:

12.f4

Black can react with:

12...exf4 13.♘xf4

White will also find no advantage with the other recapture: 13.♗xf4 g5 14.♗d2 (or 14.♗e3 ♘b6 15.♕b3 fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘f5 17.♗f2 ♘d4=) 14...♘f6 15.♕c2 fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗f5 18.♘f2 ♕d7 19.♗c3 ♗xc3 20.♕xc3 ♘g6= Black was okay in Stohl – Rasik, Czech Republic 1997.

13...♘e5 14.♕b3 fxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘f5

With double-edged play.

12...♘f6

If 12...♔h7 13.♖c1 ♘f6, as in Konnov – Nesterov, Izhevsk 2005, White should continue with 14.f4 with the following tactical point: 14...fxe4 (14...exf4 is a better try, but even here after 15.♘xf4 White has the better chances) 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 exf4 17.♘xf4 ♗xb2 18.♘xg6! With a powerful attack.

13.♖c1

White slowly prepares his play on the queenside.



13...fxe4

Another option for Black is:

13...g5

This was played in Sarfati – Mohd, Manila (ol) 1992, and now I suggest the following line:

14.♖e1N f4

14...fxe4 15.♘xe4 ♗f5 is also quite natural for Black, but here White has better prospects after 16.f3 ♕d7 17.♘df2. White has established control over the e4-square and is ready to start playing on the queenside.

15.c5 ♘g6

In this kind of position White is much faster, as it is not so easy for Black to attack on the kingside. For instance:

16.♘b5 a6 17.♘a3

Also interesting is the thematic piece sacrifice: 17.cxd6 axb5 18.dxc7 ♕d7 19.♗b4!?⩱

17...h5 18.cxd6 cxd6 19.♘c4

White has many ideas for seizing the initiative, such as ♗b4, or ♗a5 and ♘b6.

14.♘xe4 ♗f5 15.♘xf6†

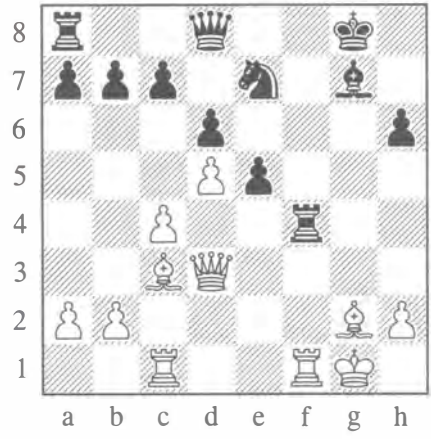
15.♖e1!? also comes into consideration.

15...♖xf6 16.♗c3

Finally White switches to the f2-f4 idea.

16...g5 17.f4 gxf4 18.gxf4 ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 ♖xf4

Here I found an appealing idea:



20.♗h3!?N

In the game Drasko – Sahovic, Yugoslavia (ch) 1991, White opted for 20.♖xf4 exf4 21.♗xg7 ♔xg7 22.♕d4†, but after 22...♔g8 23.♕xf4 ♕f8 24.♕e4 ♕g7 Black obtained reasonable play, as White cannot prevent the centralizing ...♘e5.

20...♕f8 21.♗d2 ♖f6 22.♗e6† ♔h8 23.♕h3 ♘g8 24.♔h1

White has fantastic compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Black is still solid, but he does not have a single active move at his disposal. I believe White's main idea should be to double rooks on the g-file. In any case, it would be very unpleasant to play Black's side of this position.

D) 9...♘d7 10.♘e1 f5

Besides this move, only 10...a5 is a serious alternative, and after 11.♘d3 this position is examined in the 9...a5 variation (line B).

11.♘d3 ♔h8

11...♘f6 just transposes to our main line, while 11...h6 is covered in line C.

12.f4

A thematic central clash in this line.



12...exf4

The alternatives are clearly worse:

12...♘g8 may look a natural try, but it is badly timed, as it allows White to force a favourable pawn structure: 13.exf5 gxf5 14.fxe5 dxe5 (White is also clearly better after 14...♘xe5 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.♗e3) 15.♗e3 ♘h6 16.♕d2 Black faced serious difficulties in Huzman – Maes, Amsterdam 1994.

12...a6

Obviously this is a strange move, but I decided to examine it in order to show what White intends to do if Black makes some waiting move.

13.fxe5 ♘xe5

I also analysed: 13...fxe4 14.♘xe4 (the point is that after 14.exd6 exd3 15.dxe7 ♕xe7 16.♕xd3 White wins a pawn, but Black gets great compensation in return after 16...♘e5 17.♕e3 ♗f5∞) 14...♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♘g5! Otherwise Black might be alright. 16...♘f5 17.g4 ♘h6 18.h3 White is clearly better, especially due to the poorly placed knight on h6.

14.♘xe5 ♗xe5

White is simply better after 14...dxe5 15.♗e3±; Black lacks activity.

15.♗h6 ♖f7 16.♕d2 ♘g8



This position is from the game Marin – Florean, Bucharest 1999. Now I really like:

17.♗f4!?N

With the following idea:

17...♗g7

It should be noted that 17...♗xf4 18.♖xf4 is clearly better for White.

18.♖ae1

White is threatening to play 19.e5.

18...fxe4 19.♘xe4 h6

Otherwise White was threatening to play ♘g5.

20.c5

White has a fine initiative.

13.♗xf4 h6

As we already know, if 13...♘e5 14.♘xe5 dxe5 15.♗e3 then the arising pawn structure favours White and gives him a solid advantage, as in Grachev – Khadzhaev, Rybinsk 2000.



14.♕d2!?N

This natural move seems stronger than the modest 14.♔h1 which was played in A. Maric – Skripchenko, Kishinev 1995.

14...g5 15.♗e3 fxe4

Black is practically forced to release the tension, as 15...♘f6 runs into the simple 16.e5 when White is obviously better.

16.♘xe4 ♘f5 17.♗f2

The following sequence looks logical to me.

17...♘f6 18.♘xf6 ♕xf6 19.g4! ♘d4 20.♗e3 ♕e7 21.♖xf8† ♕xf8 22.♖f1 ♕e7 23.h3

Black's knight has problems as, for example, White is threatening 24.♘f4.

E) 9...♘e8

This move and 9...♘d7 are Black's two most popular options, and they usually transpose to the same position. Still, Black has some possible deviations after:

10.♘e1 f5

10...c5 11.♘d3 f5 12.f4 would just transpose to 9...c5.

11.♘d3 ♘f6

I am rather sceptical about Black's alternatives. For example:

11...h6 12.f4 exf4 13.♘xf4

An important detail is that Black's knight cannot jump to e5 at once, as was possible in the 9...♘d7, 10...h6 line.

13...♘f6 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♕e2

White has a clear edge; he will move his knight to e6 at a suitable moment.

15...♔h7 16.♗d2 ♖e8 17.♘e6 ♗xe6 18.dxe6 c6 19.♖ae1±

White kept his advantage in Lisitsin – Panov, Tbilisi 1937.

12.♗g5!

A very strong idea, which is problematic for Black according to existing theory. White's main goal is to carry out f2-f4 as quickly as possible.

Now there is a further split between **E1) 12...fxe4** and **E2) 12...h6**.

E1) 12...fxe4

12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♗xe4 will transpose to the 13...♘xe4 line in the note below.



13.♘xe4 ♘f5

Black has several other options:

13...♗f5 is hit by a strong reply: 14.♗xf6! ♗xf6 15.f4 exf4 (somewhat better is 15...♗xe4 16.♗xe4 ♘f5 but White is still positionally better after 17.♗xf5 gxf5 18.fxe5 ♗xe5 19.♕d2) 16.♘xf6†! ♖xf6 17.♘xf4 ♕f8 18.♕d4± White had a clear advantage in Melkumyan – Benza, Russia 2008.

13...♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♗f5

There is no point in trying to be more active with 14...♗h3, as after 15.♖e1 ♕d7 16.f3! the bishop must return to f5: 16...♗f5 (and not 16...♘f5 in view of 17.♘f2 ♘d4 18.g4! and the bishop is trapped on h3) 17.♕d2 (also worthy of consideration is 17.c5!?) 17...♖f7 18.f4 ♖e8 (stronger was 18...exf4 19.♘xf4 ♗e5, although White is better after 20.♘e6) 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♘c5 ♕d6 21.b4 b6 22.♘e6! White has a clear advantage, Maherramzade – Manhardt, Medellin 1996.

15.♕e2 ♕d7

I like the following unexpected move:

16.♗xe7!

Instead 16.f4 exf4 17.♘xf4 ♖ae8 looks pretty double-edged.

16...♕xe7 17.♗xf5 ♖xf5 18.♘f4

Now I believe the critical move is:

18...♖xf4!

White was clearly better after 18...♖af8 19.♘e6 ♖8f7 20.f3 h5 21.♕e4± in C. Powell – C. Rich, corr. 1995.

19.gxf4 ♕h4 20.fxe5 ♗xe5 21.f3±

Undoubtedly Black has compensation for the exchange, but I still prefer White, Matamoros Franco – Naranjo Moreno, Campillos 2007.



14.g4!

Of all the many possible continuations, I like this concrete approach the most.

14...♘e7

14...♘d4 is very bad for Black: 15.f4 ♕e8 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♗xf6 ♖xf6 18.♖e1 ♕f8 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♘xe5 And White was simply a pawn up in Matamoros Franco – Hennigan, Campillos 2006.

15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.f4

This is the main idea behind White's 14th move. Now we have a series of essentially forced moves.

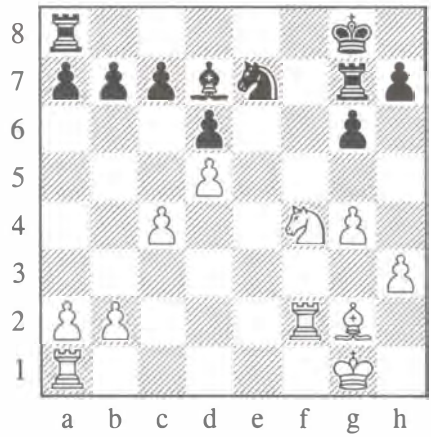
16...exf4 17.♘xf6† ♖xf6 18.♘xf4 ♕f8 19.♕d4 ♕g7

Obviously 19...♗xg4? is killed by 20.♘xg6!+–.

20.♖f2 ♖f7 21.♕xg7† ♖xg7

21...♔xg7? loses to 22.♖af1 ♔g8 23.♘xg6!.

22.h3 ♗d7



23.♖af1!N

This is stronger than 23.♘e6, which was played in both games that reached this position. 23...♗xe6 24.dxe6 ♘c6 25.c5 dxc5! 26.♖c1 ♖e8!N Not a difficult improvement. (Instead Black lost quickly after 26...♘b4 27.♗xb7 ♖e8 28.♖d1 ♘xa2 29.♗c6 ♖b8 30.e7 ♖xe7 31.♗d5† ♔g7 32.♗xa2+– in Harika – Saheli, India 2004.) 27.♗xc6 (or 27.♖xc5 ♘d8!) 27...bxc6 28.♖xc5 ♖xe6 29.♖a5 ♖d7 30.♖xa7 ♖e3 Black's counterplay is good enough for a draw.

23...♖f8 24.♘e6 ♖xf2 25.♖xf2 ♗xe6 26.dxe6 c6

If 26...♘c6 then White is just in time to get in 27.♗xc6 bxc6 28.g5! ♖e7 29.♖f6 and I believe this endgame is winning, as Black is paralysed.

27.♖d2 ♘c8 28.c5! d5 29.♗xd5!

The point.

29...cxd5 30.♖xd5±

White will regain the piece, and keep his extra pawn.

E2) 12...h6 13.♗xf6



We now have an important split depending on which way Black recaptures: **E21) 13...♗xf6** or **E22) 13...♖xf6**.

E21) 13...♗xf6 14.f4 exf4 15.♘xf4 ♗e5

As usual, other moves are possible:

15...fxe4?! only helps White to seize the initiative. 16.♗xe4 ♔g7 17.♕d3 and Black was already struggling in Sokolowski – Tokarski, Poland 2005.

15...c6 16.♔h1 ♗e5 17.♕d2 g5

It would not be a good idea to move the black queen far from the kingside, as the following game demonstrates: 17...♕a5?! 18.♘d3 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 cxd5 20.exd5! ♗d7 21.c5 Black was in serious trouble in Lenic – Sarno, Slovakia 2004.

18.♘d3 ♗xc3

The beginning of a concrete approach. Instead 18...♗g7 would not solve all Black's problems after 19.♖ae1. For example: 19...fxe4 20.♖xf8† ♕xf8 21.♘xe4 ♘f5 22.dxc6 bxc6 23.♖f1 (threatening 24.g4) 23...♕e7 24.♘b4! ♗d7 25.c5 dxc5 26.♘d5! With a winning advantage.

19.♕xc3 fxe4 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.♗xe4 ♗h3

This allows White to seize the initiative. 21...♗f5 22.♗g2 was the lesser evil, though White has strong pressure.



22.♘f2!

The point! The rook is untouchable.

22...♗f5

22...♗xf1 23.♘g4 gives White a decisive attack.

23.♗xf5 ♘xf5

This position was reached in Fontaine – A. Hunt, Patras 1999, and now White could have gained a solid advantage by simple means:



24.♖ae1N ♕d7 25.♘g4 ♕g7 26.♕d3!±

16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.♕d2 c6

Black has also tried:

17...♕d7

But this seems too slow.

18.♘b5!

The knight is heading for d4 with the idea of penetrating further to e6.

18...c5 19.♘e6! ♗xe6 20.dxe6 ♕xe6 21.♘c7 ♕xc4 22.♘xa8 ♕d4†

Black has to trade queens, as 22...♖xa8 23.♕xh6± is unsatisfactory for him.

23.♕xd4 ♗xd4† 24.♔h1 ♖xa8 25.♖ae1 ♗e5

This is Rasmussen – Solleveld, Germany 2007. Now White missed a clear chance:

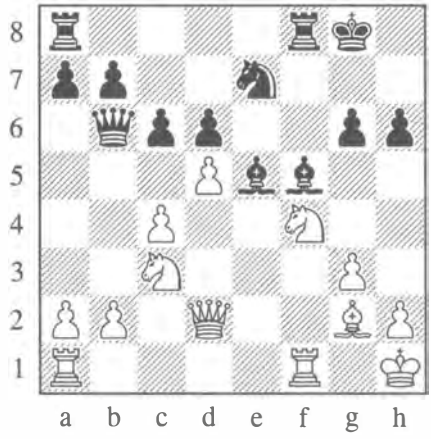
26.♗xb7N ♖b8 27.♗a6!

And now Black cannot take on b2 in view of 28.♗c4 followed by 29.♖f7.

27...♘f5 28.g4 ♘d4 29.♗c4† ♔h8 30.b3±

I do not see any reason why White should not convert his extra material.

18.♔h1 ♕b6



19.♖ae1

White has mobilized his pieces optimally and is now ready to jump his knight into e6. It is not easy to handle this position with Black, as was shown in the following encounter:

19...♖f7 20.♘e6 ♗xe6

A very important line runs 20...♕b4 21.♕xh6 ♕xc4 22.♖xf5! gxf5 23.♘g5 ♖af8 24.♕e6! ♗xc3 25.♘xf7 ♖xf7 26.dxc6 ♕xe6 27.♖xe6 bxc6 28.bxc3 d5 29.♗f3 with an unpleasant endgame for Black.

21.dxe6 ♖xf1† 22.♖xf1 ♘f5 23.♗h3 ♕e3 24.♕xe3 ♘xe3 25.♖f7

Black faced a difficult defensive task in Karpov – Gelfand, Dos Hermanas 1994.

E22) 13...♖xf6 14.f4 exf4

Black has no reliable alternative, as 14...♖f8 is clearly favourable for White after: 15.fxe5 dxe5 This is Szelenyi – Csolig, Hungary 2008, and now 16.c5!N is very strong as if 16...fxe4 then White is comfortably better after 17.♖xf8† ♕xf8 18.♗xe4 ♘f5 19.♕a4!±.

15.♘xf4



15...c6

The second option is:

15...♔h7 16.♕d3 ♖f8 17.♖ae1

White has easy play in this line; he just needs to mobilize all his pieces and then land his knight on e6 at a good moment.

17...♗e5 18.exf5 ♘xf5

Instead 18...♗xf5 19.♗e4! does not help Black either.

19.♔h1 ♕f6 20.c5 ♕g7 21.cxd6 cxd6 22.♘e6 ♗xe6 23.dxe6 ♖ac8 24.♘d5

White's advantage was undisputable in Kasparov – Ivanchuk, Riga 1995.

16.♔h1

A useful prophylactic move against a possible ...♕b6.

16...♖f7

The alternative is:

16...♖f8

The following game was very exciting:

17.c5!?

I believe there is also nothing wrong with the modest 17.♕d2 followed by ♖ae1.

17...g5

It is understandable that Black avoided 17...♗xc3 18.bxc3 cxd5 19.exf5! dxc5 20.fxg6, which looks dangerous.

18.dxc6! ♘xc6

Other possible lines are 18...gxf4 19.c7! ♕xc7 20.cxd6 ♕d8 21.♕b3† ♔h8 22.dxe7 ♕xe7 23.♘d5 ♕f7 24.♖xf4 when White is a healthy pawn up, and 18...dxc5 19.cxb7 ♗xb7 20.♘e6 ♕xd1 21.♖axd1, which also leads to a clear advantage.

19.♘g6 ♖f6 20.exf5 ♗xf5 21.♕b3† ♔h7

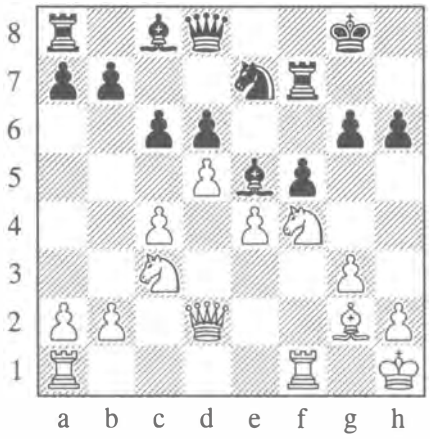
This position occurred in Konikowski – Kruse, corr. 2001. Now I found a nice winner for White:



22.♖xf5!N ♖xf5 23.♕xb7 ♔xg6 24.♕xc6 ♖c8 25.♕e4!

White's attack is decisive.

17.♕d2 ♗e5



18.♖ad1!N

This is more flexible than 18.♘d3 ♗g7 as played in Huzman – Nijboer, Netherlands 1994. The danger of Black's position can be seen in the following variation:

18...♕f8 19.c5! ♗xf4 20.gxf4 fxe4 21.cxd6 ♘xd5 22.♘xd5 cxd5 23.♕xd5 ♗g4 24.♗xe4 ♗xd1 25.♖xd1

With a winning position for White.

Conclusion:

The 6...♘c6 7.0–0 e5 variation is not Black's most critical reply to the Fianchetto variation; White should gain a comfortable edge. Most unpleasant of all for King's Indian fans is the idea that it will be White who is more likely to have attacking chances on the kingside.





King's Indian

6...♘c6 & 7...a6

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 a6

8.♕d3

A) 8...♘d7 **401**
B) 8...♖b8 **404**
C) 8...♘b4 **405**
D) 8...♗d7 **406**
E) 8...♗f5 **407**
F) 8...e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♗g5 **408**
F1) 11...♖e8 **409**
F2) 11...♗e6 12.♘d2 h6 13.♗xf6 **410**
F21) 13...♖xd2 **411**
F22) 13...♗xf6 **412**

A) 13...♕c8



14.♘g5!N

E) after 14...♗c8



15.♘c2!N

F21) 18...♖xd2



19.♔f1!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 a6

This is the most popular move order to reach the so-called Yugoslav variation.

At first my intention was to give an 8.h3 line against both 7...a6 and 7...♖b8, but unfortunately I failed to discover any advantage for White after 7...a6 8.h3 ♗d7!, which in my opinion is Black's best choice when dealing with 8.h3. So finally I decided to change my recommendation after the usual 7...a6 and go for the strange-looking 8.♕d3, while after 7...♖b8 I believe 8.h3 works well.

8.♕d3

A slightly mysterious move that made its debut in two games in 1956 – one by Gideon Stahlberg and one by Alberic O'Kelly de Galway. Perhaps the queen looks vulnerable on d3, as Black can attack it with ...♘b4 or ...♗f5, but White is defending the c4-pawn, thus creating the unpleasant threat of 9.d5, because the black knight cannot then go to its usual a5-square because it would be lost after b2-b4.

As I mentioned above, I cannot find a path to an advantage after 8.h3. For example, 8...♗d7 9.e4 e5 10.♗e3 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♖e8∞.

After 8.♕d3 Black has a wide choice, and we will deal with seven possible replies; six main lines and one sideline: **A) 8...♘d7**, **B) 8...♖b8**, **C) 8...♘b4**, **D) 8...♗d7**, **E) 8...♗f5** and **F) 8...e5**.

8...♗g4

This is probably the weakest move of all the options I examine in this chapter. White gains a very pleasant edge after:

9.d5 ♗xf3 10.exf3 ♘e5 11.♕e2 c5 12.f4 ♘ed7 13.a4

White has a stable advantage, thanks to his bishop pair and extra space. What more could White dream of in the Fianchetto variation? Here are two examples with model play for White:

13...♖e8 14.♕d3 ♕c7

Fridman – Mamedov, Internet 2005, continued: 14...♘f8 15.f5 (a decent idea, but there is also nothing wrong with the simple 15.♗d2) 15...♘8d7 16.fxg6 hxg6 17.♗d2 ♖b8 18.♖ae1 ♕b6 19.♕c2 And White retained a comfortable plus.

15.♖e1 ♖ad8 16.♗d2 e6

It is no wonder Black is looking for some activity, but this backfires:



17.dxe6! fxe6 18.♖e2 ♘f8 19.♖ae1

Black has only created additional targets for the white pieces. White was much better in Kengis – Antoniewski, Swidnica 2000.

A) 8...♘d7

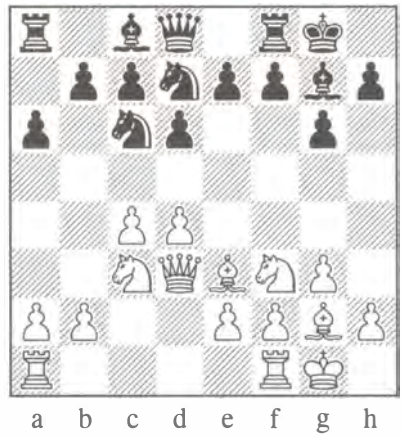
A rather logical move; Black defends against the threat of d4-d5 (he now has ...♘ce5) and, depending on the situation, Black can either break in the centre with ...e7-e5, or continue his play on the queenside.

9.♗e3

This seems to be the best idea; White's plan includes ♕d2 followed by d4-d5.

I do not believe provoking ...h7-h6 with 9.♗g5 is useful for White. It is important to understand why Black is alright after 9.e4:

Black has to continue with 9...e5 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗e3 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘de5 when he gains good counterplay. For example: 13.♕e2 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗g4! (an important intermediate move) 15.f3 ♗e6 Followed by 16...f5.



9...e5

I also examined two other moves:

9...♖b8 10.♕d2

In my opinion this is stronger than the more popular 10.♖ac1, when after 10...b5 11.cxb5 axb5 I think Black is absolutely fine.

10...♖e8

The only game where 10.♕d2 was played continued 10...e5, which transposes to the 9...e5 line.

If 10...b5 then White can favourably exchange dark-squared bishops with 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♗h6±.

11.d5

After 10.♕d2 White is ready for this advance.

11...♘ce5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.b3

I believe White has better chances, for instance:

13...b5 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♗a7 ♖b7 16.♗d4 b4 17.♘d1±

9...h6 10.♕d2 ♔h7 11.d5 ♘a5

In *Chess Informant 99* Bologan considers this move an improvement over 11...♘ce5 12.♘xe5 (I also like Bu Xiangzhi's recommendation in the same issue of *Informant*: 12.b3!? ♘xf3† 13.exf3 e5 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.f4± White's position looks very nice.) 12...♘xe5 (12...dxe5? is not really an alternative, as after 13.c5 White is positionally much better) 13.b3 c5 14.dxc6 ♘xc6 (White retains a pleasant edge after 14...bxc6 15.♗d4!±. There is no point going for 15.f4 ♘g4 16.♗xc6 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3 ♖b8 as in this case Black has some compensation for the pawn.) This position is from Bu – Bologan, Wijk aan Zee 2007, and now I am happy with Bu's recommendation: 15.♘d5!?N ♗xa1 16.♖xa1 Then after either 16...h5 17.♗b6 ♕d7 18.♖c1 or 16...g5 17.f4 f6 18.♗b6 ♕d7 19.♖f1 White has enormous compensation and it would be no fun to be Black.

12.b3 c5 13.dxc6 bxc6



Now I believe this is the right moment to improve on White's play:

14.♖ad1N

Both previous games have gone 14.♖ac1 ♖b8 15.♗a7 ♖b7 16.♗d4 c5 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 when White's rook appears to be useless on c1.

14...♖b8

If 14...♗b7 then White has a strong positional idea: 15.c5 d5 (or 15...♘xc5 16.♗xc5 dxc5 17.♕e3 ♕c7 18.♕xc5 and Black suffers

with his misplaced knight) 16.♘a4 ♗c8 The only defence against White's idea of ♘b6. And now best is 17.♗d4! as after 17...e5 White has a tactical solution: 18.♘xe5! ♗xe5 (or 18...♘xe5 19.♘b6 ♘xb3 20.axb3 ♖b8 21.♕c3 f6 22.e4 with a big advantage) 19.♗xe5 ♘xe5 20.♘b6 ♘xb3 21.axb3 ♖b8 22.e4 With an obvious positional advantage.

15.♗a7 ♖b7 16.♗d4 c5 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♘h4! ♖b8 19.f4

This is a good moment to start playing on the kingside, as Black really misses the defensive strength of his dark-squared bishop.

19...♘f6 20.e4 ♕c7 21.♕e1

With good attacking chances.

10.♕d2



10...♘b6

Two other alternatives require our attention:

10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘ce5 12.b3

This leads to an attractive position for White, as his pieces are very well mobilized for the middlegame.

12...♘c5 13.h3

A useful move that covers the g4-square, but also worth considering is the immediate 13.♗h6.

13...♗d7

The following example shows Black's problems in this structure:

14.♖ad1 ♖b8 15.♗h6 ♗xh6 16.♕xh6 f5 17.♕d2

17.b4 ♘e6 18.c5 also looks pretty strong.

17...♖e8 18.♔h2 b5

Black understandably wants some activity, but this only makes matters worse:

19.f4 b4

Or 19...♘f7 20.♘c6 ♗xc6 21.♗xc6 also leads to material losses.

20.fxe5 bxc3 21.♕xc3 ♖xe5 22.♗d5†

Black was losing material in Borovikov – Smirnov, Panormo 2002.

10...♖b8 11.♖ac1

White continues making useful moves, as there is no point rushing to release the tension in the centre: 11.dxe5 ♘dxe5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.b3 ♘g4 14.♗a7 ♖a8 15.♗d4 Everything looks fine for White, but Black has a nice trick: 15...♗h6 16.f4 And here a draw was agreed in Grabarczyk – Markowski, Warsaw 2001, in view of the following variation: 16...c5 17.♗f2 ♘xf2 18.♖xf2 ♗g7 Despite his positional concessions, Black will always have a lot of play thanks to his dark-squared bishop.

11...exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘e5 14.b3 ♗e6 15.♖fd1

White has a very comfortable set-up and after the inaccurate:

15...♕d7?!



In Zhumabayev – Zimmerman, Russia 2008, White could have increased his advantage with:
16.f4N ♘c6 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.c5±

11.b3 ♗g4 12.dxe5

The correct decision; Black has nothing to worry about after 12.d5 ♗xf3 13.exf3 ♘d4.

12...dxe5 13.♖ad1 ♕c8

Obviously Black should avoid the unpleasant endgame after 13...♕xd2 14.♘xd2. The following sample variation underlines his difficulties: 14...♖ad8 15.h3 (also worth a look is 15.♗xc6!? bxc6 16.♘de4) 15...♗c8 (15...♗e6 runs into 16.♘de4 followed by ♘c5) 16.c5 ♘d7 17.♘d5 Black is going to lose the c7-pawn.



14.♘g5!N

The text is a strong improvement over 14.♗xb6 cxb6 15.♘d5 ♕d8 16.♕e3 ♗xf3 17.exf3 ♘d4, which gave Black normal play in David – Smirin, Istanbul 2003.

14...♖d8

After 14...h6 15.♘ge4 White not only intends to bring his knight to c5, but also has the tricky tactical idea of ♘d6, as ...cxd6 ♗xb6 would lead to a favourable pawn structure for him.

15.♕c1 ♘d4

This looks like principled play for Black, but after:

16.c5!

White easily proves his advantage in every line:

16...♘d7

The alternative is 16...h6 17.cxb6 hxg5 18.♗xd4 exd4 19.♘d5 ♖xd5 20.♗xd5 c6 21.♗c4 when White is simply an exchange up.

17.♗xd4 exd4 18.♘d5 ♖e8 19.♕f4±

White's advantage is obvious.

B) 8...♖b8 9.d5

As I mentioned above, after 8.♕d3 White is ready to play d4-d5.



9...♘b4

It is really hard to believe that Black can get away with playing:
9...♘a7 10.a4 c5 11.e4 e5

This is Kozak – Tibensky, Czech Republic 1997, and now I believe White should play:
12.a5N

We have reached a position that closely resembles the "Reluctant Benoni" with the

difference that the knight is on a7 instead of c7, which seems clearly inferior for Black. I will offer some illustrative lines:

12...♗d7

If Black goes straight for ...f7-f5 with 12...♘e8, then White can play 13.♗e3 with the idea of b2-b4. 13...f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♘g5 It was important to include 14.exf5 to prevent Black's idea of ...f5-f4, which is now impossible in view of mate on h7. 15...♘c7 Now I believe White can try the sharp: 16.b4!? cxb4 17.♘e2 h6 18.♘h3 ♖a8 19.♖a4 White will regain the pawn, while Black's misplaced knight on a7 should tell eventually.

13.♗d2 b6 14.axb6 ♕xb6 15.♖a3

White is slightly better, as he always is in these types of position.

10.♕d1 a5

Black has to vacate the a6-square for his knight to defend against the threat of 11.a3.

11.e4

I think 11.♗e3!? also deserves serious consideration.

11...c6 12.a3 ♘a6

Now I believe White should play modestly:



13.♖e1!N

With the idea of preparing the e4-e5 break under ideal circumstances, and if 13...cxd5 14.exd5 then the rook is useful on the e-file.

In Roiz – Barcenilla, Internet 2004, White opted for 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.e5 ♘g4 15.exd6 and now 15...♕xd6 would give Black very good play with his pressure on the long diagonal.

13...♘c5 14.e5 dxe5

Black also fails to equalize after: 14...♘g4 15.exd6 exd6 16.h3 ♘e5 (worse is 16...♘f6 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♘d4! with a clear advantage) 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♗e3±

15.♘xe5 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♗f5 17.♗e3

White is slightly better, with the main point being that Black cannot play 17...♖c8? in view of 18.♘c6! bxc6 19.♗xc5 with a winning position.

C) 8...♘b4

Black wants to check if the white queen has a good retreat square:



9.♕d2

I believe this is the only way to fight for an advantage. Instead 9.♕b1 looks quite strange, and Black can even afford to move his knight back with 9...♘c6.

9...♘c6

If 9...c5?! then 10.d5 and the knight is absolutely useless on b4, and of course 10...♗f5? does not work: 11.♘h4 ♘c2 12.♘xf5 ♘xa1 13.♘xg7 ♔xg7 14.b3 Black loses the knight and her position is hopeless, Harika – Zenyuk, Beijing (blitz) 2008.

10.b3

The question is whether White's queen is more useful on d2 than on d1. The answer is Yes! as you can see from the following lines:

10...♖b8 11.♗b2 b5 12.cxb5 axb5 13.d5 ♘a7

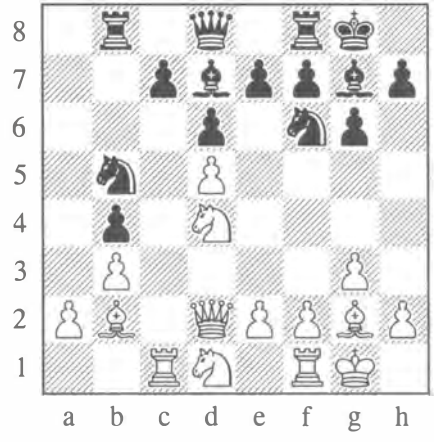
The main difference with having the queen on d2 is clear in the line: 13...♘a5 14.♘d4 b4 15.♘d1! The knight has a good square on d1! White is clearly better here.

14.♘d4 b4

Black has also tried 14...♗d7, but after 15.♖ac1 ♖b6 16.h3 e6 17.e4 he failed to equalize in Solozhenkin – Oney, Bethune 2000.

15.♘d1 ♗d7 16.♖c1 ♘b5

In Carlsen – Kasimdzhanov, Moscow (blitz) 2007, White overlooked a simple move (of course Carlsen would spot this in a game with a normal time control):



17.♘c2!±

This would win the b4-pawn immediately.

D) 8...♗d7

One of the critical continuations.

9.d5 ♘b4 10.♕d1

Instead 10.♕d2 a5 11.♘d4 ♕c8 is perfectly playable for Black.

10...a5

Here I analysed for a long time and decided to go for a new concept:



11.a3!?

The main theoretical continuation is 11.e4 e5 12.♘e1 when the knight is heading for d3, from where it will support White's play on the queenside. However, the following game looks rather convincing and leads to good play for Black: 12...b6! This allows Black to solve the problem of his b4-knight. 13.♖b1 ♘a6 14.a3 ♘c5 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 ♘a4 Usually if Black finds a good use for his queenside knight (such as exchanging it) then he should be alright, and this position is no exception. 17.♘xa4 ♖xa4 18.♘d3 ♕a8 Black was fine in Bukal – Fedorov, Croatia 2005.

White also achieves nothing after 11.♗e3 e5 12.dxe6 ♗xe6 as in Votava – Khalifman,

Fuegen 2006. It is very important that now the black knight can retreat to c6 after 13.a3.

11...♘a6 12.♗e3 c6

If Black continues by analogy with 11.♗e3 by playing 12...e5 then after 13.dxe6 ♗xe6 14.♘d4 White obtains serious pressure. Here we can see why it is important to insert 11.a3 – with our move order the knight was forced to a weak square on a6.

I prepared 11.a3!? as a novelty for this book and tested it in the game Avrukh – Bitensky, Israel 2009. Black replied with 12...♕c8 and then after: 13.♗d4 ♗h3 14.e4 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 e5 16.dxe6 ♕xe6 17.♖c1 White already had a comfortable space advantage, and Black's next move starts a misguided plan: 17...♗h6? 18.♘d2 ♘g4 19.h3 ♘e5 20.f4 ♘d3 Now I mistakenly chose 21.♘d5 allowing 21...f5, when instead 21.f5!N ♕d7 22.♘d5 would give White a devastating attack.

13.♗d4 cxd5

I also analysed 13...c5 14.♗e3 ♘c7 15.a4 (Black intended to play 15...b5). It is important that 15...e5 16.dxe6! is clearly in White's favour: 16...♗xe6 17.♗f4 ♘fe8 18.♕b3 White still has pressure.



14.♘xd5!

An important detail is that after exchanging dark-squared bishops White will have chances of seizing the initiative on the kingside.

14...♘xd5 15.cxd5±

There is nothing badly wrong with Black's position, but I prefer White's chances.

E) 8...♗f5



9.e4 ♗g4

With this idea Black tries to undermine the white queen's position, but it appears she is not doing so badly on d3.

10.♗e3

The alternative plan is 10.d5 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘d4 12.♕d1 c5 (12...♘d7 13.♗e3 c5 14.dxc6 ♘xc6 leads to the same type of position) 13.dxc6 ♘xc6 with very complex play, but I believe this position should be perfectly playable for Black.

10...♘d7

Black intends to fight for the d4-square by playing ...e7-e5.

11.♘e1

After seriously investigating this position I came to the conclusion that the text is White's best try for an advantage. I would also like

to mention that 11.h3 leads to thematic play after 11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 e5 13.d5 ♘d4 14.♗g2 c5 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.b4 when the position was double-edged in Ki. Georgiev – Du. Popovic, Serbia 2006.

11...e5

It makes no sense for Black to play 11...♘b6, as White can comfortably continue with 12.f3 ♗d7 13.♘c2 covering the d4-square.

12.d5 ♘d4 13.f3 ♘c5 14.♕d1 ♗c8

Unfortunately for Black, he cannot retreat his bishop to d7: after 14...♗d7? 15.b4 his knight is trapped on c5.



15.♘c2!N

This is a clear improvement over the inaccurate 15.b4 ♘d7 when it appears White cannot remove the d4-knight without making a concession. 16.♖b1 Now Black gets counterplay on the queenside. (The point is that the obvious 16.♘c2 is met strongly by 16...a5 17.a3 axb4 18.axb4 ♖xa1 19.♘xa1 ♘b6 20.♕d3 f5 with good play for Black.) 16...a5 17.a3 axb4 18.axb4 This is Stefanova – Paehtz, Heraklio 2007, and now 18...♘b6!N would bring Black rich counterplay.

15...♘xc2 16.♕xc2

Mission accomplished; the d4-knight is gone and now White can start to play on the queenside.

16...a5 17.a3

Using the fact that 17...a4 is impossible.

17...f5 18.b4 ♘a6 19.♖ab1

I believe White's prospects are brighter.

F) 8...e5

This is Black's main move according to theory.

9.dxe5

Definitely the most challenging continuation; I do not believe Black has any problems after 9.d5 ♘b4 10.♕d1 a5.



9...dxe5

The knight recapture is less popular and rightly so:

9...♘xe5 10.♘xe5 dxe5 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.♗g5

Black experiences significant problems, due to the following line:

12...♖e8

Instead 12...♖d4 looks all wrong, as after 13.b3 the rook is obviously misplaced in the centre: 13...c6 14.♘a4 with unpleasant pressure.

13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.cxd5

The c7-pawn is a clear target of attack.

14...f6

Other moves look inferior:

14...♗d7 15.♖ac1 ♖ac8 16.d6! cxd6 17.♗xb7 ♖xc1 18.♖xc1 ♖b8 19.♖c7 ♗e6 20.b3 a5 In Matjushin – A. Vovk, Ukraine 2006, White should have played 21.♗c6! and I do not see any reasonable defence against 22.♗d2 winning the a5-pawn.

14...e4 15.♖ac1 c6 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.b3 gave White a clear edge in T. Cox – Conterno, Coventry 2005.



15.♗e3N

This is stronger than 15.♗d2 ♗f8 16.♖ac1 ♗d6 17.a3 a5 when Black had a defendable position in Fridman – Bezold, Internet (blitz) 2005.

15...♗f8 16.♖fc1 ♗d6 17.♗c5 ♖e7 18.♖c3

White has nagging positional pressure; he will double rooks on the c-file and capture on d6 under favourable circumstances.

10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♗g5

Now there is a split between **F1) 11...♖e8** and **F2) 11...♗e6**.

I also analysed 11...e4N but Black is still far from equality in the following line: 12.♘d2 h6 13.♗xf6 ♖xd2 14.♘xe4 ♖xe2 15.b3!

F1) 11...♖e8



12.♖fd1!

A very instructive moment. After seriously investigating this position I decided that 12.♖fd1 is the best option for White. For a better understanding of this decision, let's have a quick look at White's alternatives.

If 12.♘d5 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘d4! And the arising position is rather double-edged, so the concrete approach does not work.

12.♘d2 This looks flexible, but Black quickly plays 12...♘d4 with the main idea of saving a tempo on ...h7-h6 by playing ...♘e6. 13.e3 (I tried to improve on White's play with 13.c5, but after 13...♖b8 14.♘c4 ♗g4 Black is absolutely fine.) 13...♘e6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.b4 In Payen – Croizer, Avoine 2004, Black should have activated his dark-squared bishop with 15...♗g7! followed by 16...f5 and 17...e4.

12...h6 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6

Black has wasted a tempo on ...h7-h6, so now is the right moment to play:

14.♘d2 ♘d4

I also examined 14...♗e6 15.♘d5 ♗d8 16.♘e4. This knight is heading for c5, where it will put additional pressure on Black's queenside. 16...♔g7 17.♘c5 ♗c8 18.♘c3! With the positional idea of damaging Black's

pawn structure with ♗xc6. 18...♘a5 19.b4 ♘xc4 20.♘xb7 White is better.



15.c5!?N

I believe this is the most challenging continuation. Black can easily solve his problems after 15.♘de4 ♗d8 16.♘c5 ♖b8 17.e3 ♘e6 18.♘d7 ♗xd7 19.♖xd7 ♘c5 20.♖d2. Now in Zugic – Babula, Istanbul (ol) 2000, the natural 20...e4N would secure Black equal play.

15...♖b8

Other options are:

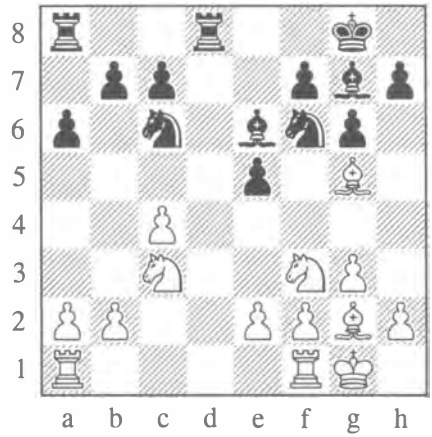
15...♘e6 16.c6! b5 17.♘d5 ♗d8 18.b4 I believe Black's position is very difficult, as he lacks counterplay, while White can slowly improve his position with e2-e3, ♘b3 and of course the main positional threat is to play a2-a4 and ♗g2-f1, putting real pressure on Black's queenside.

15...♗d8 16.♘c4 ♔g7 17.♖d2 looks very unpleasant for Black.

16.♘d5 ♗d8 17.e3 ♘e6 18.b4±

White is obviously setting the tone.

F2) 11...♗e6



12.♘d2 h6

12...♘d4

This is not so good with Black's bishop on e6.

13.♖fd1 c6

Unsatisfactory for Black is 13...h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.e3 ♘c6 16.♘d5!.

14.e3 ♘c2 15.♖ab1 ♖d7

15...♘b4 was played in Psakhis – Babula, Batumi 1999, and now Psakhis correctly pointed out 16.a3! ♘d3 17.♘de4 ♘xe4 18.♗xe4 f6 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♗xd3 with a healthy extra pawn for White.



16.♘b3!N

This is my improvement over 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♘de4 ♖xd1† 18.♖xd1 ♗e7 19.♗f1 f5 20.♘d6 b5 when Black was already taking over the initiative in Drasko – G. Szabo, Sozina 2004.

16...♗xc4

Black cannot play 16...♖xd1† 17.♖xd1 ♘d7, as after 18.♗e4 f6 19.♗xf6! he loses material.

17.♗xf6 ♖xd1† 18.♖xd1 ♗xf6 19.♘a5 ♗e6 20.♘xb7 ♖b8 21.♘c5 ♖xb2 22.♘xe6 fxe6 23.♗xc6

This endgame is very unpleasant for Black, due to his shattered pawn structure.

13.♗xf6

Black has a choice of which minor piece he wishes to collect: **F21) 13...♖xd2** or **F22) 13...♗xf6**.

F21) 13...♖xd2

This move leads to a strategically dangerous situation for Black:

14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♗xc6!

It is important to start with this exchange, as after 15.b3 Black can try to avoid White's positional idea with 15...♘a5!? instead of the compliant 15...♖ad8, as was played in most games that reached this position.

15...bxc6 16.b3 ♖ad8

The most popular answer, but I should also mention 16...a5, which has the idea of getting rid of the a-pawn. However, Black was in trouble in the following model example: 17.♖fd1 ♖xd1† 18.♖xd1 a4 19.♘xa4! ♗xc4 20.♖d2 ♗e6 21.f3 ♔f6 22.♖c2 ♖a6 23.♔f2 ♔e7 In Csom – Zimmerman, Hungary 2001, if White had played 24.♘c5N ♖a3 25.♘xe6 fxe6 26.♔e3 Black would have been strategically lost.

17.♖fd1

Black's position is very hard to defend. White has an easy plan, which includes exchanging both rooks, as the endgame with knight versus bishop would be unpleasant for Black, due to his weak pawns on the queenside.

17...♖8d4

I also examined 17...f5 when I believe White should not hurry to exchange rooks, but instead calmly execute his plan with 18.♔f1 (if 18.♖xd2 ♖xd2 19.♖c1 as in Ehlvest – Barcenilla, San Francisco 2000, Black could create some counterplay with 19...f4! 20.♔f1 ♗f5). 18...♔f6? Black's last move is a blunder that was not exploited in Harika – Borosova, Beijing (rapid) 2008: 19.♘d5†!N This simple tactic would have given White a decisive advantage after 19...cxd5 20.♖xd2 d4 21.♖ad1 c5 22.e3.

18.♖xd2

Both games that reached this position continued with this move, but it is also worth considering 18.♔f1N ♖c2 19.♖dc1, although in this case Black keeps both rooks on the board with 19...♖cd2.

18...♖xd2

Now it is obvious that White should play:



19.♔f1!N

19.♖c1 is a serious inaccuracy that allows Black to get rid of his weak a-pawn: 19...a5! 20.♔f1 a4 21.♖d1 ♖c2 22.♘xa4 ♖xa2 23.♘c5 ♗f5 Black has a defendable position, which he even managed to win in Bocharov – Loskutov, Novosibirsk 2002.

19...♖c2 20.♘a4

20.♔e1? might look cool, but 20...♗xc4! is a rude awakening.

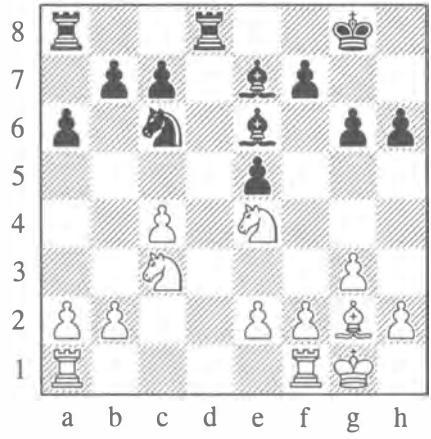
20...a5 21.♔e1 h5

There is not a big difference compared to the main line if play continues: 21...g5 22.♔d1 ♗f5 23.g4 ♗g6 24.♘c5 ♖b2 25.f3

22.♔d1 ♗f5 23.h3 g5 24.g4 hxg4 25.hxg4 ♗g6 26.♘c5 ♖b2 27.f3

White has a clear plan: his king goes to e3, then he plays a2-a4 and the rook gets into the game along the d-file. Of course this is not a forced line, but it shows the general picture of this endgame. White can play for a win without any risk, while Black's defensive task is highly unpleasant.

F22) 13...♗xf6 14.♘de4 ♗e7



15.♘d5 ♗xd5

I also checked 15...♖ab8, which has never been tested in practice. 16.♖ac1 f5 (16...♗xd5 17.cxd5 ♘b4 18.♘c3 c6 19.dxc6 leads to the same type of position as in our main line, with the inclusion of the useful ♖ac1) 17.♘xc7 ♗f7 18.♘c3 ♗xc4 19.♘3d5 ♗xd5 (otherwise ♖xc6 and ♘e7-c6 is decisive) 20.♗xd5† ♔h8 21.♗xc6 bxc6 22.b3 White has a clear positional advantage.

16.cxd5 ♘b4 17.♘c3 c6

As we can see from the following lines, it is hard for Black to do without the text move:

17...♗d6 was tried in Grycel – Mista, Wisla 2000. White can reply 18.♖fc1N a5 19.♘b5 ♘a6 20.♖c4 with annoying pressure.

17...f5 has a nice tactical refutation: 18.a3 ♘c2 19.♖ac1 ♘d4 20.e3 ♘b5 (probably Black discovered too late that the desirable 20...♘b3 runs into 21.d6! ♖xd6 22.♗d5† ♖xd5 23.♘xd5 ♘xc1 24.♘xe7† ♔f7 25.♖xc1 ♔xe7 26.♖xc7† followed by 27.♖xb7 with a winning rook endgame) 21.♘xb5 axb5 22.♖xc7 ♗d6 23.♖xb7 White was two pawns up and winning in S. Atalik – Djukic, Cannes 2007.

18.dxc6 ♘xc6



19.♘d5!

A very strong move that was found by Dautov. White is only marginally better after 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♖fd1 f5 followed by ...♔f7-e6.

19...♗f8

Black has tried to defend this unpleasant endgame in various ways:

19...♔f8 20.♘b6 ♖ab8 21.♖fc1 (White also gained an edge after 21.♗xc6 bxc6 22.♘c4 f6 23.♖ac1 ♖b5 24.♖c2 ♔e8 25.b3± in Cosma – Jianu, Romania 2005) 21...♖d2 This is Roiz – Filipovic, Basel 2006, and now I found a strong line: 22.♗xc6!N bxc6 23.♖xc6 ♖bd8 (if 23...♔g7 24.b3 ♖xe2 25.♔f1 ♖d2 26.♘c4 ♖d5 27.♖e1 f6 28.♖xa6 and White has a winning position) 24.e3 ♖xb2 25.♘c4 ♖c2 26.♘xe5 ♖dd2 27.♖xc2 ♖xc2 28.a4 White is a clear pawn up.

19...♗c5 20.♖ac1 ♗a7 21.e3 (White continues to play positionally, although I do not see anything wrong with 21.♘f6† ♔g7 22.♗xc6 ♔xf6 23.♗xb7 ♖ab8 24.♖c7!). 21...♖d6 22.♘c3 ♔g7 23.♘e4 ♖d5 24.♘c3 ♖d6 25.♖fd1 ♖xd1† 26.♘xd1 White was better in Filippov – A. Zhigalko, Moscow 2004, due to the superiority of his light-squared bishop over Black's dark-squared one.

19...♖d6 20.♖ac1 ♖ad8 (after 20...♗f8 21.♘b6 ♖e8 22.♗xc6 bxc6 23.♖fd1 ♖ed8 24.♖xd6 ♖xd6 25.♔f1 the endgame is difficult for Black due to his weak pawns on the queenside, Zhang Zhong – Ginting, Tarakan 2008) 21.♘xe7† ♘xe7 22.♗xb7 ♖b6 23.♖c7 ♔f8 24.b3 ♖d2 25.e3± White ended up a pawn to the good in Shinkevich – Predke, Kazan 2009, because Black cannot play 25...♖xa2 due to 26.♖d1 ♖e6 27.♖d8† ♔g7 28.♖dd7 ♔f8 29.♗g2! and the bishop transfers decisively to c4.

20.♘b6 ♖ab8 21.♗xc6

There is no doubt the text move forces a pleasant advantage, but I think White can do even better: 21.♖fd1!N



With the following illustrative line: 21...♗g7 22.♖ac1 ♖xd1† 23.♖xd1 ♖d8 24.♖d7! ♖xd7 25.♘xd7 e4 26.♗xe4 ♗xb2 27.♗xc6 bxc6 28.♘b8 c5 29.♘xa6 c4 30.♔f1 White's extra pawn should decide the issue.

21...bxc6 22.♘c4±

White had a lasting edge in Dautov – V. Milov, Essen 2000.

Conclusion:

The 6...♘c6 7.0–0 a6 variation is a key line for which White should be well prepared. My recommendation is 8.♕d3, which is not the most popular line, but I have not selected it to avoid theory – I believe it is the best move. My improvements in the above lines suggest that White can retain an edge, and the main line leads to an endgame where White has an enduring advantage – bad news for King's Indian aficionados.

Chapter 26

King's Indian

6...♘c6 & 7...♖b8



Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♖b8

8.h3

A) 8...e5 415
B) 8...♗f5 415
C) 8...a6 9.e4 416
C1) 9...e5 416
C2) 9...♘a5 417
C3) 9...♘d7 418
C4) 9...b5 10.cxb5 axb5 11.♖e1!? 419
C41) 11...♘d7 420
C42) 11...e5 421
C43) 11...b4 422
C44) 11...e6 424

B) after 11...a6



12.♖c1N

C41) note to 14..c5



16.♕c1N

C43) after 13...h6



14.♖c1!?N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♖b8

The two main move orders that Black uses to reach the Yugoslav variation are 7...♖b8 and 7...a6. We have already seen the more popular 7...a6, so now it is time for 7...♖b8

8.h3

It is important to understand the difference between this variation and 7....a6. If after 7...♖b8 White continues in the same way as we do against 7...a6 with:

8.♕d3 e5

Then this move is good enough for Black.

9.d5

9.dxe5 is absolutely harmless in view of: 9...dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♗g5 h6! 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘d5 ♗g7 (with the rook on b8 Black should not be afraid of 14.♘xc7, as in this case he will take over the initiative with 14...e4!) 14.♖ad1 ♗e6 And due to his bishop pair, only Black can be better, Grabarczyk – Markowski, Glogow 2001.

9...♘b4

A natural move.

10.♕d1 a5

Securing the c5-square for the knight.

11.e4 ♗d7 12.♘e1 ♕e8

In my opinion Black has a normal King's Indian game.

13.a3 ♘a6 14.♘d3

This is Wang Yue – Inarkiev, Nizhniy Novgorod 2007, and now natural is:

14...a4

Followed by ...b7-b6 and ...♘c5, which will give Black a good game.

After 8.h3 Black has three main lines: **A) 8...e5**, **B) 8...♗f5** and **C) 8...a6**.

A) 8...e5 9.d5

I believe this is the most challenging continuation. Sometimes White goes for 9.♗e3 a6, but I am not sure about the position that arises after 10.♖c1 ♗f5 11.g4 ♗d7 12.♕d2 h5! 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.g5 ♘h7. Black had counterplay in Grischuk – Inarkiev, Baku 2008.

9...♘e7

Now 9...♘a5 loses its charm, as the g7-bishop is blocked by the e5-pawn. White can simply play 10.♘d2 c5 11.a3 followed by 12.b4, when Black's knight will probably be forced to withdraw to b7. White has an obvious edge.

10.e4

Compared with the line 6...♘c6 7.0–0 e5 8.d5 ♘e7 we have the extra moves h2-h3 and ...♖b8. I am confident h2-h3 is more useful than the rook move. For example, White may often win a tempo with ♗e3, attacking the a7-pawn. One possible continuation is:

10...♘e8 11.♗e3 a6 12.♕d2 f5 13.♘g5 fxe4 14.♘gxe4 ♘f5 15.♗g5

White has a pleasant edge thanks to his control over the e4-square, Najdorf – Ardiansyah, Manila 1973.

B) 8...♗f5



This tricky move has twice been played by Inarkiev, one of the strongest King's Indian

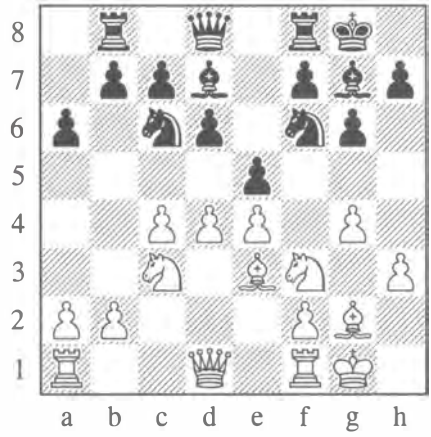
experts. Naturally this position closely resembles the 6...♘c6, 7...♗f5 line (Chapter 23). Black's idea is to prove that in this line his ...♖b8 is more useful than White's h2-h3. However, I intend to make good use of 8.h3:

9.g4! ♗d7 10.e4

10.♗e3!? might be an interesting alternative.

10...e5 11.♗e3 a6

Now I like a solid positional approach:



12.♖c1N

Levon Aronian instead chose a concrete approach: 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.f4 White won convincingly in Aronian – Inarkiev, Khanty-Mansiysk (4) 2007, but I believe Black can improve his play with 14...♗e6N 15.♘d5 exf4 16.♗xf4 ♘e8 with a rather double-edged game, as White has seriously weakened his kingside pawn structure.

12...b5

If 12...exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘e5 14.b3 c5 15.♘de2 then Black has no time for 15...b5 because the d6-pawn is hanging, and White will continue with 16.f4 putting a lot of pressure on the black position.

13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 dxe5 15.cxb5 axb5 16.♕c2 c6 17.♖fd1

White has thematic positional pressure, while the weakening of his position caused by g3-g4 is not relevant.

C) 8...a6

This is Black's main choice. The position after 8...♗d7 9.e4 e5 10.♗e3 a6 will be examined in the 9...e5 variation (line C1).

9.e4



Now there is a major branching point: **C1) 9...e5**, **C2) 9...♘a5**, **C3) 9...♘d7** and **C4) 9...b5.**

C1) 9...e5 10.♗e3 ♗d7

Naturally Black has other possibilities:

10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♗d7 12.♖c1 would transpose to our main line.

10...b5 leads to a pleasant positional advantage for White: 11.dxe5 dxe5 (11...♘xe5 does not change much: 12.♘xe5 dxe5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♕c2 White is better due to Black's weakened queenside) 12.cxb5 axb5 13.♖c1 ♗e6 In A. Sorensen – Bogo, Aarhus 1990, the simple 14.b3N, restricting Black's light-squared bishop, would have secured a positional edge.

11.♖c1 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♖e8

Instead 12...♘xd4 also fails to solve Black's problems: 13.♗xd4 c5 14.♗e3 ♗e6 15.♕e2 ♘d7 16.♖fd1 ♕e7 17.f4 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.♗f2 Black was under strong positional pressure in Ippolito – Paragua, Hawaii 1998.

13.♖e1 ♘e5

Black also has two other options:

13...♕c8 14.♔h2 Now Black has a typical attacking idea that can occasionally prove dangerous: 14...♖e5 I like the following approach for White: 15.♘f3 ♖h5 16.♘h4! Playing against the black rook. 16...b5 17.cxb5 axb5 18.f4 Taking away the rook's potential retreat square. 18...♘e7 19.b4! Now the rook merely looks misplaced on h5, Arkell – Talbot, Fishguard 2003.

13...♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗e6 should be met by 15.♕e2 with the better chances for White.

14.b3 c5 15.♘de2 ♗xh3

A very nice tactical idea, but it is probably insufficient.

Unfortunately for Black 15...b5 16.f4 ♘c6 17.♕xd6 b4 does not work in view of 18.e5 bxc3 19.♘xc3! ♖e6 20.♕d2 ♘e8 21.♖ed1 when White is much better.

16.♗xh3 ♘f3† 17.♔g2 ♘xe1† 18.♕xe1 ♘xe4 19.♘xe4 ♖xe4 20.♕d2 b5

In Ignacz – Borosova, Olbia 2008, White could have gained a clear advantage with a simple manoeuvre:

21.♘c3N ♖e8 22.♘d5

White's two minor pieces are much stronger than Black's rook.

C2) 9...♘a5 10.♕e2 b5

This looks quite logical, but the problem is that it allows the following line:



11.e5 ♘e8 12.cxb5 axb5 13.b4!

A very important resource.

13...♘c6

Black cannot play 13...♘c4, as after 14.a4 c6 15.axb5 cxb5 16.♘xb5! he loses a pawn, Pigusov – Gleizerov, Voronezh 1988.

14.♖d1

Also very interesting is 14.a3. For example: 14...dxe5 15.dxe5 ♘d4 16.♘xd4 ♕xd4 This looks challenging, but White has a fine answer: 17.♘d5! ♕xa1? (17...♕xe5 would avoid immediate disaster) 18.♘xe7† ♔h8 19.♗b2 ♕xf1† 20.♕xf1 ♗e6 21.♘c6 ♖b6 22.♗d4! In P.H. Nielsen – N.V Pedersen, Denmark 2009, Black was dead lost.

14...♘xb4

Otherwise Black will suffer under strong positional pressure.

15.♖b1 ♘c6

In N. Pert – Heinrich, Bunratty 2008, the correct route to an advantage was:

16.♖xb5N ♗a6 17.♖xb8 ♘xb8

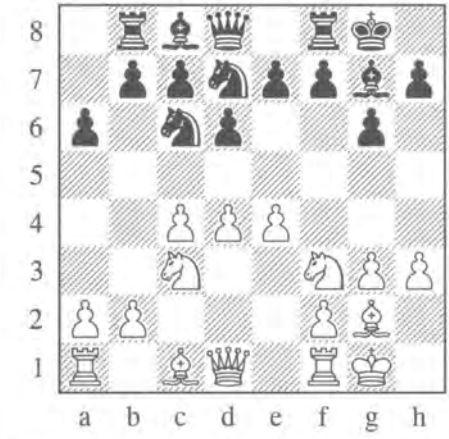
17...♗xe2 18.♖xd8 ♗xd1 19.♖xe8 ♖xe8 20.♘xd1± cannot be acceptable for Black.

18.♕c2

White is better, thanks to his space advantage.

C3) 9...♘d7

This is best met by:



10.♗g5!

Before playing ♗e3 White provokes ...h7-h6 and later on will gain a tempo attacking this pawn with ♕d2.

10...h6

Other possible moves are:

10...b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♖c1 h6 13.♗e3 ♘a5 14.b3 It is essential to cover the c4-square. 14...b4 15.♘a4 ♗a6 16.♖e1 ♗b5 Now in Wisniewski – Szoen, Frydek Mistek 2004, instead of the modest 17.♘b2, White should have played the principled:



17.♕d2!N Attacking both the h6- and b4-pawns. 17...♗xa4 18.bxa4 ♔h7 19.e5! White is better, as the e5-pawn is poisoned due to the following variation: 19...dxe5 20.dxe5 ♘xe5? 21.♘xe5 ♗xe5 22.♖c5! ♗c3 23.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 24.♖f1 ♘b7 25.♖xc7 ♘d6 26.a5 With a winning position.

10...♘a5 11.b3 c5 12.♖c1 ♘c6

White creates strong pressure after 12...b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.dxc5 dxc5 15.♘d5 ♘c6 16.♕d2.

13.d5 ♘a5

I also examined the natural-looking 13...♘d4 14.♘xd4 cxd4 15.♘e2 h6 16.♗d2 b5. Here the play becomes very concrete, as Black is close to gaining counterplay, but White retains an edge with precise moves: 17.cxb5 ♖xb5 (or 17...axb5 18.♗b4 ♕b6 19.♕d2 gives White a positional edge) 18.♖c4 ♕b6 19.b4!

14.♘e2 b5 15.♗d2 ♕b6 16.♕c2

White has neutralized Black's activity on the queenside and enjoys a pleasant advantage, Drozdovskij – Dembo, Differdange 2008.

11.♗e3 b5

Two other options are:

11...e5 12.♖c1

I believe this is stronger than 12.d5 ♘e7, which allows Black to create a clear plan.

12...exd4 13.♘xd4 ♘de5 14.b3 ♘xd4 15.♗xd4 c5 16.♗e3 ♘c6

In Ataman – Erdogdu, Turkey (ch) 2008, White could have played simply:



17.♕d2N ♘d4

Or 17...♔h7 18.♖fd1 ♘d4 19.♘e2!.

18.♘e2!

There is no point in White embarking on the line 18.♗xh6 ♗xh3!.

18...♘xe2† 19.♕xe2

White has an obvious positional advantage due to the weak d6-pawn.

11...♘a5 12.b3 c5

As always, this idea is not good enough to gain real counterplay

13.♕d2 ♔h7 14.♖ac1 ♘c6

This position occurred in Fernandez Lopez – Perez Aleman, Badalona 1993. Black intends 15...e5 which might lead to a closed and unclear position, so I propose the following improvement:



15.d5N ♘a5 16.♕d3

Now if Black tries to play on the queenside with:

16...b5

It does not work, as after:

17.cxb5 axb5 18.♘xb5 ♗a6 19.a4

Black cannot play:

19...♕b6

In view of:

20.b4!

With a clear advantage.

12.cxb5 axb5

Certainly White can continue with 13.♖c1, which would transpose to a position that has been examined in the 10...b5 line, but White also has another interesting idea:

13.♕c1!? ♔h7 14.♘xb5 ♗a6

Black decides to engage in a tactical clash, but it ends in White's favour, so the lesser evil was 14...♖xb5 15.♕xc6 ♖xb2, even though after 16.♖fc1 White is slightly better.

15.a4 ♘a5 16.♕c3 c6



17.♖fd1! ♘c5

17...cxb5 does not help Black: 18.axb5 ♖xb5 19.b4!±

18.♘d2 cxb5 19.axb5 ♖xb5 20.♗f1! ♖b8 21.♗xa6 ♘xa6 22.♖xa5

White was a clear pawn up in Goldin – Smirin, Philadelphia 1996.

C4) 9...b5

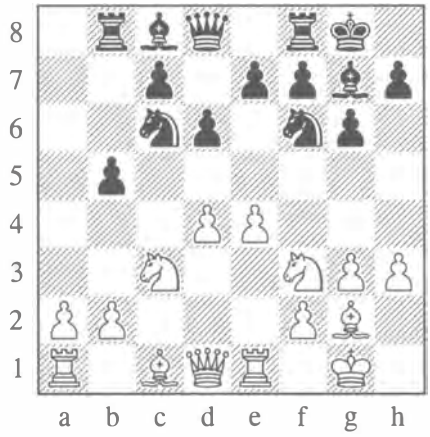
This is by far Black's most popular choice.

10.cxb5

Recently, more and more White players have been switching to this move, while after 10.e5 dxe5 11.dxe5 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♘d7 Black stands quite well.

10...axb5 11.♖e1!?

The most challenging move. This leads us to the initial position of our line and now Black has to decide between four main continuations:



The variations we will study are: **C41) 11...♘d7**, **C42) 11...e5**, **C43) 11...b4** and **C44) 11...e6**.

But first a minor line must be dealt with:

11...♗d7

This allows White to place his pieces very comfortably.

12.e5 ♘e8 13.♗f4

The position is clearly in White's favour, for instance:

13...♘a5 14.♖c1 b4 15.♘d5 c6

In C. Powell – M. Davis, corr. 1993, White could have played:

16.exd6N exd6 17.♘e7† ♔h8 18.b3

With a clear positional advantage.

C41) 11...♘d7 12.♗g5

As in almost every case, I prefer this move to moving the bishop to e3 directly.

12...h6 13.♗e3 ♘a5

Black has also tried 13...e5 14.♖c1 ♘a5. In Fominyh – Kochetkov, Alushta 1994, White could have gained a clear advantage with: 15.dxe5! ♘xe5 (or 15...dxe5 16.b3! also leads to a very unpleasant position for Black) 16.♘xe5 dxe5 17.♕xd8 ♖xd8 18.♘d5 White wins a pawn.

14.b3

The c4-square must be taken away from Black's knight.

14...c5

The alternative is:

14...b4

Now the position resembles one that was examined in the 9...♘d7 variation (line C3), but White has an even better version, as Black cannot win a tempo with ...♗a6.

15.♘a4

I believe the alternative retreat 15.♘e2 is also worth considering. The only game to reach this position continued: 15...c5 (I believe more critical is 15...♗b7 and in this case White has to accept the challenge and play 16.♕d2 ♗xe4 17.♗xh6 with a very complicated game) 16.♖c1 ♗a6 17.dxc5 dxc5 18.♗xc5 ♘xc5 19.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 20.♖xc5 ♘b7 21.♖c6 Black failed to get sufficient compensation in Magerramov – Ezat, Abu Dhabi 2003.

15...♘f6

I also examined 15...♗b7 16.♕c2 c5 17.dxc5! ♗xa1 18.♖xa1 and White has powerful compensation for the exchange. Here we can see the advantage of playing ♗g5, as now the h6-pawn is hanging.



This position was reached in Sturua – Hasanov, Moscow 1979, and now I found a nice improvement:

16.♕c1N ♔h7 17.♕c2 c6 18.♘b2

It is essential for White to control the ...c7-c5 advance, as if it does not work then Black has serious difficulties creating counterplay.

15.♕d2 ♔h7 16.♖ac1

White has arranged his pieces optimally.

16...♘c6

Also 16...c4 17.b4 ♘c6 18.a3± does not solve all Black's problems.

17.♖ed1 b4 18.♘e2 ♕a5

It seems as though Black is very close to getting a decent game, but White has a surprising resource that allows him to keep the initiative.



19.e5! ♖d8

This is a serious error that allows White's initiative to grow even more dangerous.

Stronger was 19...dxe5 20.♘xe5! (20.dxe5 ♖d8! is not clear) 20...♘cxe5 21.dxe5 ♖b6 22.f4 and White is better positionally, as he has managed to restrict Black's dark-squared bishop.

The main point of White's idea can be seen in the following line: 19...cxd4?! 20.♘exd4 ♘cxe5 21.♘xe5 ♘xe5 22.f4 And after the black knight retreats 23.♘c6 will be decisive.

20.e6! fxe6 21.dxc5 ♗b7 22.♘f4

White was attacking strongly in Vennemann – H. Simon, e-mail 2001.

C42) 11...e5

This is quite a playable move, as long as Black is ready to defend the slightly inferior position that arises after:



12.dxe5

Not dangerous for Black is 12.d5 b4! 13.♘a4 ♘e7 as ...c7-c6 is on the way.

12...♘xe5

The alternative does not bring Black relief either: 12...dxe5 13.♗g5 ♕xd1 14.♖axd1 ♘e8 15.♘d5 f6 16.♗e3 White was better in D. King – Levitt, Britain (ch) 1989.

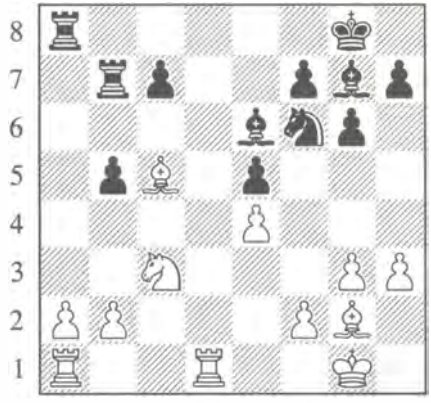
13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♗e3 ♗e6

If 14...c6 then White has a strong answer: 15.a4 bxa4 (15...b4 is dubious, because 16.♕xd8 ♖xd8 17.♘b1 ♗f8 18.♖c1 leads to a strategically difficult position for Black) 16.♘xa4 ♗a6 17.♕c1± White keeps annoying pressure.

15.♗a7

The text is probably White's best option, as the natural-looking 15.♘d5 is not dangerous for Black after: 15...♗xd5 (Certainly 15...c6 would be an unfortunate decision as after 16.♘b4! White is clearly better; the c6-pawn is a definite target.) 16.exd5 e4 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗xf6 ♕xf6 19.♖b1

15...♖b7 16.♗c5 ♕xd1 17.♖exd1 ♖a8

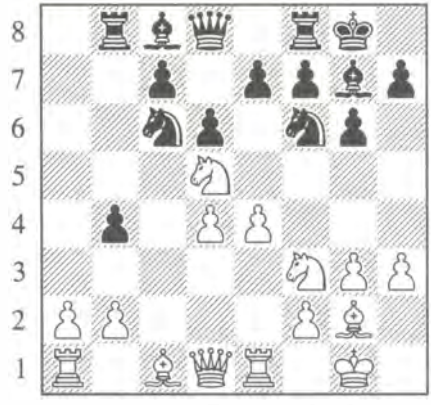


18.♘d5 ♘d7 19.♗e3 ♗f8 20.a3

White retained a slight edge in P. Nikolic – McShane, Germany 2007.

C43) 11...b4 12.♘d5

Another important position in this line.



12...♘d7

Black has a range of other options, of which the final one is especially important:

12...♗d7 13.♘xf6†

The simplest path to an advantage.

13...exf6

Much worse is 13...♗xf6 14.♗h6! ♗g7 (if 14...♖e8 15.e5 ♗h8 16.♖c1 and White has total domination) 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♖c1 ♘a5 17.♕d2 and White was much better in Wirig – Habibi, Calvia 2007.

14.♗f4N

This natural move improves on 14.d5, which was played in Sisniega – Zapata, Seville 1992.

14...♖e8 15.♖c1±

White has a very pleasant game.

12...e6

This is certainly not the best option, as it allows White a very clear plan:

13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♗h6 ♗g7

14...♖e8 does not change much: 15.e5 was good for White in R. Byrne – Perez Perez, Mar del Plata 1961.

15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♖c1 ♘e7 17.♕c2 c6



This is Profumo – Bonanno, Milan 2008, and now:

18.e5N

White has good attacking chances as Black will miss his dark-squared bishop.

12...♘xd5

Finally we get to a critical line!

13.exd5 ♘a5 14.♗g5 ♖e8 15.♖c1 ♖b5 16.♘h2 b3

Just as relevant is 16...♗d7 17.♕d2 f6 18.♗f4 e5 19.dxe6 ♖xe6 20.♖xe6 ♗xe6 21.♕e2 ♗d7 22.h4 and White was obviously better in D. King – Gruenberg, Budapest 1986.

17.♗d2! bxa2

This interesting position was reached in Urban – T. Petrosian, Warsaw 2005, and now it is not obvious why White avoided the following natural variation:

18.b4N ♘b7 19.♕a4 ♗d7 20.♕xa2 ♗xd4 21.♕c4 ♗g7

Black could not afford to remove his bishop from the long diagonal, as after 21...♗b6 22.♘g4! White's attack is too dangerous.

22.♕xc7±

Black's misplaced knight on b7 makes a difference.

13.♗g5 h6

If 13...♗b7 then after 14.♕d2 the combination of the g5-bishop and d5-knight creates irritating pressure on Black's position.



14.♖c1!?N

I think this concrete approach is White's best chance of an advantage. The other options did not impress me much:

14.♗e3 e6 15.♘f4 e5 16.♘d5 exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.♗xd4 ♘e5 19.f4 c5 20.♗f2 This is Lputian – Erdogdu, Heraklio 2007, and here the accurate 20...♘d7N 21.♕d2 ♖e8 would lead to a double-edged game.

In *ChessBase Magazine 104* Stohl suggested 14.♕c1 was a strong move. In fact the position is far from clear after the pretty forced variation: 14...hxg5 15.♕xc6 e6 16.♘xc7 ♖b6 17.♕c2 ♗b7 18.♖ac1 ♖c6 19.♕xc6 ♗xc6 20.♖xc6 ♕b8∞

14...hxg5

Another important line is: 14...♗b7 15.♖xc6 hxg5 16.♘xb4 ♗a8 (I also examined 16...e5 17.d5 ♘c5 18.♕c2 when White is clearly better. Black is not really threatening to take on c6, as after the knight recaptures, Black can hardly stop White's a-pawn.) 17.♖c4 c5 18.dxc5 dxc5 (after 18...♘xc5 19.♕d2 ♕a5 20.♖e2! Black has nothing in return for being a pawn down) 19.♘d3 ♗xb2 20.♘xc5 ♘xc5 21.♖xc5 ♕xd1 22.♖xd1 White keeps his extra pawn and a clear edge.

15.♖xc6 b3

15...♗b7 would transpose to the 14...♗b7 line above.

16.axb3 ♗b7 17.♖c2

This move is stronger than 17.♘b4 ♗a8 18.♖c4 c5! 19.dxc5 ♘xc5⩲ when Black has reasonable compensation.

17...c6 18.♘c3 c5

After 18...♕b6 White can give up his extra pawn to develop an initiative: 19.e5 ♕xb3 20.♘e4! Then White will also win Black's g-pawn.

19.dxc5 ♘xc5 20.b4! ♗xc3 21.bxc3 ♘xe4

At first sight it seems Black has managed to solve all his problems, but his g5-pawn is weak

and this allows White to gain an advantage with direct moves:

22.♘d4 d5

Another line runs: 22...♘f6 23.♕d2 e5 (the main point is that after 23...g4 24.hxg4 ♘xg4 White has the strong 25.♕e2! winning the e7-pawn) 24.♘c6 ♗xc6 25.♗xc6 g4 26.hxg4 ♘xg4 27.♖d1!± Black has to give up his d-pawn.

23.c4 e5

23...e6 24.b5 leaves White with a pleasant advantage.

24.♘b3 f5

Black eventually loses a pawn after 24...♘f6 25.♘c5±.



25.♗xe4 fxe4

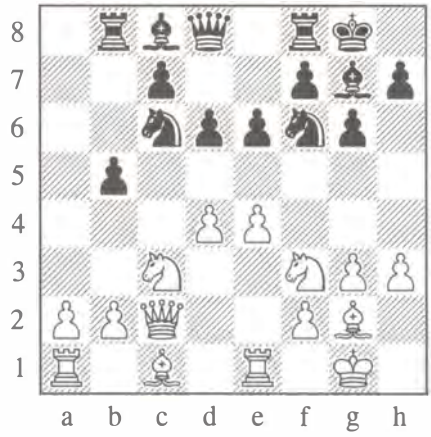
If instead 25...dxe4 then 26.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 27.b5 and White's two passed pawns should decide the game.

26.♘a5 d4 27.♘xb7 ♖xb7 28.♖xe4 ♖xb4 29.♖xe5 d3 30.♖d2 ♕b6 31.♖b5 ♖xb5 32.cxb5 ♕xb5 33.♖xd3

White should win.

C44) 11...e6 12.♕c2

This is White's best option; Black is absolutely fine after 12.e5 dxe5 13.♘xe5 ♘xd4 14.♗e3 c5 and 12.d5 ♘a5 seems very unclear to me.



12...b4 13.♘e2 ♗b7

Black has also tried another bishop move: 13...♗d7 In this case White should continue 14.♘f4 by analogy with our main line, creating the idea of an e4-e5 advance.

14.♘f4

This seems to be White's best option, as Black can easily improve after 14.♗g5 h6 15.♗d2 as in Greenfeld – Hebden, Dublin 2008. Now after 15...♘e7 16.♘c1 (An important line arises after 16.♘f4 g5 and now after the fairly forced consequences 17.e5 gxf4 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.♗xf4 ♘f5 20.g4 ♗xf3 21.gxf5 ♗xg2 22.♔xg2 ♗g7 the position is very complicated.) 16...♕d7 Black's idea is 17...♕c6.

14...♘d7

Black has other options as well, but none of them seem good enough:

14...e5?! is positionally dubious, as after 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.♘d3! ♖e8 17.♘c5 White has exactly what he wants: clear positional pressure, Blazik – Camper, corr. 1999.

14...g5?! This obviously weakens the black king. 15.♘d3 h6 16.♗d2 g4?! Certainly it

was better not to weaken the kingside even more. 17.hxg4 ♘xg4 In Szekely – Pecorelli Garcia, Havana 2001, White had the strong 18.d5 ♘d4 19.♘xd4 ♗xd4 20.♗h3!± with an obvious advantage.

15.d5!?

An interesting try, but it was also worth considering not clarifying the position and just developing normally with 15.♗e3.

15...exd5 16.♘xd5 ♖e8 17.♗g5 ♕c8

Black cannot solve his problems tactically: 17...♘d4 18.♘xd4 ♕xg5 19.♘c6 ♗xc6 20.♕xc6 White has significant pressure.

18.♖ac1

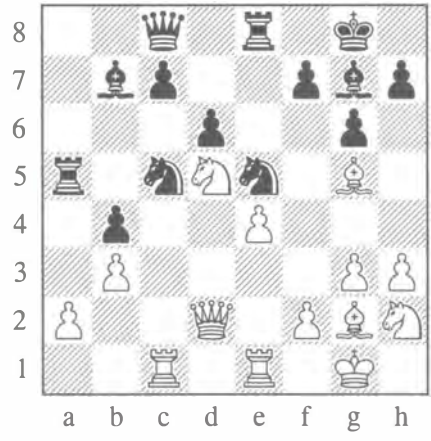
The following encounter was a very exciting battle:

18...♖a8 19.b3 ♖a5 20.♕d2 ♘c5 21.♘h2!

A fine attacking idea – the knight is heading for g4, from where it will help launch a strong offensive.

21...♘e5

White is also better after 21...h5 22.♗f6, due to the weakness of Black's b4-pawn.



22.♘f6†!

White plays for an attack. He could grab a pawn with 22.♘xb4, but after 22...♕a8 all Black's pieces are very active and he has fine compensation.

22...♗xf6 23.♗xf6 ♘ed3

After 23...♘cd7 24.♗xe5 ♖axe5 25.♕xb4 White stays a pawn up.

24.♕h6 ♘e6

This interesting position was reached in J. Horton – Vorobiev, e-mail 2006. White has various tempting lines and one very strong option is:

25.♘g4!N



25...♖h5

25...♘xe1 26.♗b2 leads to an immediate disaster.

26.♕d2 ♘xe1 27.♖xe1

White's powerful attack more than compensates for Black's material advantage.

Conclusion:

The first point to note is that the 7...♖b8 line requires a different answer from White than the related 7...a6 system. In this case I recommend 8.h3. The critical variation is line C4: 8...a6 9.e4 b5 10.cxb5 axb5 when I believe 11.♖e1!? offers White good chances.



King's Indian



6...c6

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 c6

7.0–0

A) 7...♘a6 427
B) 7...♕b6 430
C) 7...♗f5 8.♘e1 432
C1) 8...e5 434
C2) 8...♗e6 436
D) 7...a6 437
E) 7...♗g4 440
F) 7...♕a5 8.e4 440
F1) 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 441
F11) 10...♘bd7 441
F12) 10...♘fd7 442
F13) 10...e5 445
F2) 8...♕h5 445
F3) 8...e5 9.h3 448
F31) 9...exd4 449
F32) 9...♘bd7 10.♖e1 451
F321) 10...♖e8 452
F322) 10...exd4 454

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 c6

Black keeps a great variety of options open with this flexible move.

7.0–0



This is the basic starting position of the present chapter. Black's main options are as follows: **A) 7...♘a6, B) 7...♕b6, C) 7...♗f5, D) 7...a6, E) 7...♗g4** and **F) 7...♕a5**.

7...♘bd7 8.e4 e5 takes us to Chapter 28 or 29.

7...♗e6

This thematic move does not make much sense in this particular situation. White gets better chances with simple play:

8.d5 cxd5 9.cxd5 ♗g4

If 9...♗d7 I suggest 10.♗e3 ♘a6 11.♗d4 ♕a5 12.e4 with better chances.

10.♘d4 ♘a6 11.h3 ♗d7 12.♗e3 ♘c5

Krueger – Tardel, Germany 2002. Here I recommend:

13.b4!?N ♘a6 14.♕b3

White's spatial superiority gives him a definite edge.

A) 7...♘a6

This move has been played a few times by Viorel Bologan, a King's Indian expert. The fact that he now appears to have given it up may tell us something about its objective merits...

8.e4 e5

Other options are not very attractive for Black:

8...♗g4

Despite the fact that in 20(!) out of 21 games White opted for the natural 9.h3, I still prefer:

9.♗e3

The idea is to continue normal development by means of ♕d2, without wasting time on h2-h3. I only found one practical example, which continued:

9...♕d7 10.♖e1 ♘c7

We can see the point of White's previous move after 10...♗h3 11.e5! ♗xg2 12.♔xg2 ♘g4 13.♗f4 dxe5 14.dxe5 and Black's knight is obviously misplaced on g4.

This position occurred in Schmitz – Suedel, Corr. 1986.



11.e5!N

This would have given White excellent chances, for instance:

11...dxe5 12.♘xe5 ♗xd1 13.♘xd7 ♘xd7 14.♖axd1

With a stable advantage thanks to the bishop pair.

8...♘c7 9.h3 ♖b8

This is a rather slow plan, which allows White to obtain better prospects by simple means.

10.a4 a6 11.a5 d5

After 11...♘d7 12.♗e3 e6 13.♕d2 Black has a very passive position and his attempt to get some counterplay on the queenside backfired: 13...b5 14.axb6 ♘xb6 15.b3 ♘d7 16.♖fb1 and Black only succeeded in creating weaknesses in his pawn formation, Bui Vinh – Duong Thuong, Dong Thap 2004.

12.e5 ♘d7

12...♘e4 13.♘a4 does not solve Black's problems either.

13.♕e2 b5

Guldberg – Em. Petersen, Aalborg 1995. I do not see any point in opening any lines on the queenside, and thus recommend:



14.c5!N

This seems pretty obvious. Here is an illustrative line:

14...♘e6 15.♗d2 ♖e8 16.♘a2!

Heading for the ideal b4-square.

16...f6 17.♘b4 ♗b7 18.exf6 exf6 19.♖fe1

White's chances are clearly higher, especially in the long term, as Black is tied to the defence of his a6- and c6-pawns.

9.h3

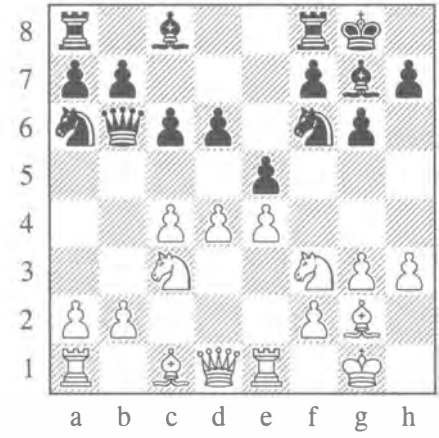
This is a standard prophylactic move. White not only prevents a possible ...♗g4, but also secures the e3-square for his bishop.

9...♕b6

This is Black's main idea. He wishes to exert pressure in the centre, while inhibiting the development of the c1-bishop, which must stay at home at least temporarily in order to guard b2.

After 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♖e8 11.♗e3 ♘c5 12.♕c2 we reach a well known position, that will be examined via the 6...♘bd7 move order in Line D2 of Chapter 28.

10.♖e1



10...exd4

We should also consider

10...♖e8

In this case I recommend the thematic:

11.d5

Blocking the centre often proves an effective response to the rook's arrival on e8. With the centre closed, Black's last move becomes worse than useless as the rook would prefer to be on f8 to support the ...f7-f5 break.

11...♗d7

Not the most accurate, but even after the superior 11...cxd5 12.cxd5 ♗d7 13.♖b1! White gets a favourable position, thanks to the misplaced queen on b6.

12.♗e3!

White seized the opportunity to develop with gain of tempo in Barsov – Gofshtein,

Hoogeveen 1999. Black was forced to retreat to c7, as after 12...♕xb2? 13.♘a4 ♕a3 14.♗c1 ♕b4 15.♗d2 ♕xc4 (or 15...♕a3 16.♖e3) 16.♗f1 Black's queen is trapped.

11.♘xd4 ♖e8

There are a few other options:

11...♘d7

Now I found a new concept for White.



12.♘de2!?N

Obviously I was not satisfied with White's play in the following encounter, where Black got a great position: 12.♘c2 ♘e5 13.♗e3 ♕a5 14.♗f1 ♗e6 15.♘a3 ♕b4 Trifunovic – Bekker Jensen, Witley 1999.

12...♘e5

Another line is 12...♕b4 13.♗f4 ♕xc4 (if 13...♘e5 14.b3 White keeps everything under control) 14.b3 (less clear would be 14.♕xd6 ♖e8) 14...♕e6 And now White is better after both 15.♕xd6 ♘e5 16.♖ad1± and 15.♗xd6 ♖d8 16.♘f4 ♕e8 (16...♕f6 runs into 17.e5! with the following tactical justification: 17...♘xe5? 18.♗xe5 ♖xd1 19.♖axd1 ♕g5 20.h4 and White wins) 17.♕c2 ♘e5 18.♖ad1±

13.b3 ♘c5 14.♗e3 ♘ed3 15.♖f1

Black's activity has come to an end, while White will slowly drive Black's knight from d3 away by means of ♕d2 followed by ♖ad1.

11...♘g4 12.hxg4 ♕xd4

The alternative does not solve Black's problems either. 12...♗xd4 13.♗e3 ♗xe3 14.♖xe3 ♗e6 (The b2-pawn is untouchable: 14...♕xb2? 15.♖b1 ♕a3 16.♘a4 ♕xa2 17.♗f1! and Black is helpless against the coming ♖a1 or ♖b2) 15.b3 (15.♗f1!? ♖ad8 16.♖b1 followed by b2-b4 comes into consideration as well) 15...♖ad8 16.♕e2 ♘c5 This position occurred in Medic – Rogic, Bled 1997, and now I like 17.g5N ♘d7 18.f4± with a small but stable edge.

13.♕e2 ♗e6 14.♗f1 ♕b6 15.♗f4 ♖ad8 16.♖ad1±

White is in control, Tregubov – Iskusnyh, Novgorod 1997.

Returning to the main line, here I found a promising new idea:



12.♘b3!?N

Shielding the b2-pawn in preparation for ♗e3, while also avoiding any ...♘xe4 tricks.

12...♗e6

I also examined 12...♘d7 13.♗e3 ♕b4 14.♗f1 ♘dc5 15.♖c1 with the possible continuation 15...♘a4 16.a3 ♘xc3 17.♖xc3! ♕a4 18.♗d4 with better chances for White.

13.♗e3 c5

If 13...♕c7 14.♕e2 White has a comfortable position.

14.♗f1 ♘d7 15.♖b1 ♘e5 16.♘d2±

White's army is much better mobilized for further battle.

B) 7...♕b6

This move recently became popular.

8.b3

One of the main replies to Black's system and in my opinion the most promising one.



8...e5

Black has two other popular options:

8...♕a5

The whole idea of transferring the queen to h5 at the cost of a tempo seems somewhat artificial.

9.♗b2

9.♕d2 is more popular, but I do not see any reason to refrain from the natural development of the bishop.

9...♕h5 10.e4 ♗g4

I also examined 10...♗h3 when 11.♖e1! is very strong, intending to push the e-pawn. 11...♘g4 (after 11...♗xg2 12.♔xg2 e5 13.h3 Black's queen is misplaced on h5) 12.♘h4 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 and Black achieves nothing.

11.♕d3 ♘bd7 12.♘h4!

This ambitious move underlines the misplacement of Black's kingside pieces.

Too soft is 12.♖fe1 e5, Roiz – Carlsen, Rishon Le Zion (blitz) 2006.

12...e5



13.h3!N

This move is stronger than 13.f3 ♗e6 14.♘e2 as played in Friedrich – Lorscheid, Wuerttemberg 1995.

13...♗e6 14.d5

Now the following line looks more or less forced:

14...♘c5 15.♕d2 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♗h6

16...♗d7 runs into the unexpected 17.♗c1! and Black has to give up the g-pawn in order to defend against the threat of ♗f3.

17.♕c2 ♗xh3

Obviously 17...♗d7? loses to 18.♗f3.

18.♗xh3 g5 19.♘f5! ♕xh3 20.f3

Despite being temporarily a pawn up, Black's position is very difficult to handle, for instance:

20...g4 21.♖f2!+–

Black is helpless against the threat of 22.♖h2.

8...♘bd7 9.e4 e5 10.♖e1

In my opinion this is the critical line. It is harder to achieve anything after 10.d5 ♘c5 11.♗e3 cxd5. It is worth pointing out that there is no transposition to Chapter 29 here.

True, the present position could easily be reached via the move order 6...♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4 c6 9.♖e1 ♕b6 10.b3. However, in Chapter 29 I recommend 9.h3 instead of 9.♖e1.

10...exd4 11.♘a4

Despite White's high score after 11.♘xd4, I believe Black should be fine after 11...♘g4!.

11...♕a5 12.♘xd4



12...♖e8

Another direction is 12...♘g4 13.♗b2 ♘c5 14.♗c3 ♕d8 15.♘xc5 (15.♘b2!? also deserves serious consideration; it is often a good idea to avoid exchanges, as White has an obvious space edge. Play might continue 15...a5 16.h3 ♘f6 17.♕c2 ♖e8 18.♖ad1± and White keeps better chances.) 15...dxc5 16.♘e2 This type of position is favourable for White, as Black has insufficient activity to compensate his worse pawn structure, as demonstrated by the following encounter. 16...♗xc3 17.♘xc3 ♗e6 (Knaak correctly indicates in *ChessBase Magazine 25* that Black gets a worse endgame after 17...♕d4 18.♕xd4 cxd4 19.♘a4 and Black's central pawn is rather weak. Still, this was the lesser evil.) 18.h3 ♘e5 19.f4± and White clearly obtained the upper hand in Greenfeld – Fishbein, Beer-Sheva 1991.

13.♗b2 ♘c5 14.♗c3 ♕c7 15.♘xc5

This time 16.♘b2 is not an option as the e-pawn is hanging.

15...dxc5 16.♘c2 ♘h5

We have reached a similar position to that examined after 12...♘g4. The present version is an improved version for Black, but this still does not enable him to equalize.

17.♗xg7 ♘xg7 18.♕d2 f5!?

The best chance.

If 18...♗e6 19.♕c3 ♖ad8 20.♖ad1 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1 ♖d8 22.♖d2± White keeps a small but long-lasting edge thanks to his better pawn structure.

19.♖ad1 fxe4 20.♖xe4 ♗f5 21.♖xe8† ♖xe8 22.♘e3 ♗c8

We are following the game Kurajica – Prie, Debrecen 1992. Now I propose the following modest improvement:



23.h3N ♘e6

White's advantage is significant after 23...♘f5 24.♘xf5 ♗xf5 25.g4! ♗c8 26.♖e1.

24.♘g4 ♖d8 25.♕e1 ♖xd1 26.♕xd1±

White keeps a slight edge, and can follow the simple plan of exchanging as many pieces as possible.

9.d5

Although this has only been White's sixth(!) most popular choice, I believe it to be the most ambitious continuation, which emphasizes the misplaced position of the queen on b6.

9...cxd5

Another important line goes:

9...e4 10.♘g5

I did not discover any advantage for White after 10.♘d4 ♘xd5!.

10...cxd5

Clearly worse is 10...♗f5?! 11.♗e3 ♕d8 12.♘gxe4 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 ♗xe4 14.♗xe4 ♕e7 15.♗g2 ♗xa1 16.♕xa1± and White has powerful compensation for the exchange, Razuvaev – Filippov, Novgorod 1995.



11.cxd5N

This transposes to the main line below (9...cxd5 10.cxd5 e4 11.♘g5).

The complications after 11.♗e3 ♕a5! Dizdar – J. Horvath, Austria 1998, look very unclear to me, although it is obvious that White should have reasonable compensation after: 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♗xa1 14.♕xa1⩲

10.cxd5

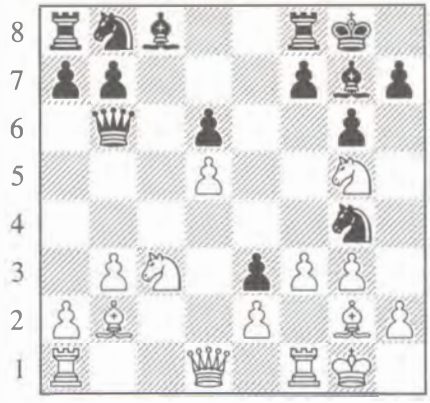
Black is doing fine after 10.♘xd5 ♘xd5 11.♕xd5 e4!.

10...e4 11.♘g5N

I believe this is more challenging than 11.♘d4, Matnadze – Dacalor, Patras 1999, 11...♘g4!N 12.e3 f5 and Black has fully adequate play.

11...♘g4 12.♗b2 e3 13.f3

The position is rather complex, but I believe White has the advantage, as he is better developed and the e3-pawn is a serious target.



13...♘f6

We should also consider 13...♘f2 14.♕c1 h6 15.♘ge4 ♘xe4 16.fxe4 (less clear is 16.♘xe4 ♗f5!) 16...♘d7 17.♘a4 ♗xb2 18.♘xb2 ♘e5 19.♖b1! White prepares ♘c4, followed by recapturing with the b-pawn, if Black swaps the knights. It looks like Black cannot keep his e3-pawn, for instance: 19...♗g4 20.♘c4 ♘xc4 21.bxc4 ♕d4 22.♖d1 ♕c5 23.♖b5 ♕c7 24.♕xe3 with an advantage.

14.♘a4 ♕a6

14...♕d8 15.♗d4±

15.♗d4 ♘bd7 16.♘c3 h6 17.♘ge4

White maintains the advantage.

C) 7...♗f5



Recently a fashionable choice.

8.♘e1

In my opinion this is White's best chance to fight for an opening advantage. The idea is very simply to play e2-e4 with tempo.

Now we have **C1) 8...e5** and **C2) 8...♗e6**.

8...d5

This could be a good idea – unless there is a concrete problem...

9.♕b3!

Attacking both the d5- and b7- pawns.

9...♕b6 10.cxd5 cxd5

The most tenacious. White's task is much easier after 10...♕xb3 11.axb3 cxd5 12.♘xd5 ♘c6 13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.e3 ♖fd8 15.♗d2 ♗e6, Leibbrand – Walther, Germany 1992, and now the simple 16.♖a3N would just keep a healthy extra pawn.

11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.♗xd5 ♘c6 13.e3 e5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♘f3 ♗f6

This was Bentzen – E. Mortensen, Denmark 1991. Now I like:



16.e4!?N ♕xb3 17.axb3 ♗g4 18.♔g2±

Although Black has some activity, I can hardly believe he can claim sufficient compensation for being a pawn down.

8...♕d7

Sometimes Black prefers 8...♕c8, which will quickly transpose.

9.e4 ♗h3 10.♗xh3!?

White usually opts for 10.f3 or 10.♘d3, but the text seems to me very logical, despite only having been played a couple of times in practice. The main point is that Black's queen is diverted from the queenside, forcing the second player to expend one more tempo to prepare ...b7-b5. White hardly needs to worry about Black's attacking chances, as he can always drive the queen away with ♘d3-f2 if necessary.

10...♕xh3 11.f3 ♘a6 12.♘d3 ♕d7

Black was probably already worried about ideas of g4 with the aim of trapping the queen.

13.♗e3

White can also consider 13.a4!?N preventing the ...b7-b5 advance.

13...b5

Another game went 13...♘e8 14.a4 ♘ec7 15.♖a3!? ♘e6 16.d5 cxd5 17.exd5 ♘ec5 18.♘xc5 dxc5 19.♕d2± with better chances for White, Chiburdanidze – Foisor, Gothenburg 2005.

14.cxb5 cxb5

This position occurred in Cvitan – Loncar, Tucepi 1996. Now I developed the following play for White:



15.♕b3!N ♘c7

Much worse for Black is 15...♖ab8?! 16.d5! ♖fc8 17.a4! b4 18.♘e2 with an obvious positional advantage.

16.♖fc1 ♖fc8 17.♖c2 ♘e6 18.♖ac1 a6 19.♘e2±

White enjoys a pleasant positional edge, thanks to his spatial superiority.

C1) 8...e5 9.d5 cxd5 10.cxd5



10...♘a6

There are two interesting alternatives:

10...a5

Black takes some space on the queenside, but at the same time weakens the b5-square.

11.♘c2!

Immediately heading towards the newly created outpost.

11...♘a6 12.♘a3 ♖c8 13.♗d2

Also interesting is 13.♗e3 ♘d7 (If 13...♘g4 then 14.♗d2 and Black's knight is misplaced on g4. I also examined 13...♘c5 14.♘c4 with the idea 14...♘ce4 15.♕b3 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 and White is better, due to the Black's weak pawns on the queenside.) 14.♘cb5 ♘b6 Ilincic – Khmelniker, Budapest 2004. Now after the simple 15.♕d2!?N ♘b4 16.♖fc1 White has a serious initiative on the queenside.

13...♘c5

Somewhat stronger would have been 13...♘b4, although here after 14.♖c1 ♕b6 15.b3! with the idea of ♘c4 White's chances are somewhat preferable.

14.♘c4

Black's last move blocked the c-file, thus facilitating the text move. The second knight will look to jump to b5 under favourable circumstances.

14...♘ce4

If 14...b6 15.♗g5! h6 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♘b5 White gets a stable edge.

15.♘xe4 ♖xc4 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♕b3 ♕c7

This looks like a blunder, but Black's problem was that 17...♖c2 was not really working, because after 18.♗h6 he loses an exchange, due to White's threat of e4.

18.♗xa5±

White just won a pawn, Quinteros – Hansson, Reykjavik 1986.

10...♕d7 11.e4 ♗h3

As usual in these types of positions, White should not be too concerned about the exchange of light-squared bishops. In return he gets a few important tempos to kick-start his initiative on the queenside.

12.♘d3 ♗xg2

12...♘a6 13.f3 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 would just transpose. Black can hardly benefit by delaying the exchange indefinitely.

13.♔xg2 ♘a6 14.f3 ♖fc8

Black chooses a passive strategy, because the desirable idea of carrying out ...f7-f5 is not really working:

14...♘h5 15.g4! and the thematic pawn sacrifice 15...♘f4† 16.♘xf4 exf4 17.♗xf4 f5 gets nowhere after 18.exf5 gxf5 19.g5.

15.♗e3 ♘e8 16.a4

Preparing the ♘b5 jump.

16...♘c5

Tondivar – Van der Veen, Hoogeveen 2007. Now I would continue:

17.♘xc5!N dxc5 18.a5! ♘d6 19.♕a4

The well placed knight on d6 does not solve all of Black's problems here. He still suffers from a passive bishop and slightly vulnerable queenside pawns.

11.e4 ♗d7

There is also:

11...♗g4 12.f3 ♗d7 13.♗e3

With the pawn on f3 White should hurry to establish control over the g1-a7 diagonal in order to avoid a possible check on b6.

13...♘h5

This position occurred in Matnadze – Zozulia, Patras 1999. Now White has to react quickly, as Black intends to get some activity by means of ...f5 and ...♘f6.



14.♕b3!N

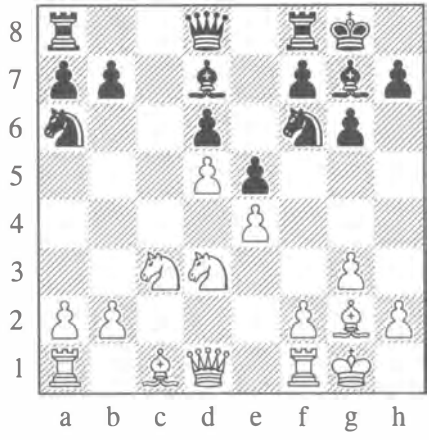
Now Black has no comfortable way of defending the b-pawn.

In the game she obtained a reliable position after 14.♘d3 f5 15.♕d2 ♘f6.

14...b6 15.♕a3! ♘c5 16.b4 ♘b7 17.♕a6

White seizes the initiative on the queenside.

12.♘d3



12...♕a5

I also examined two other options here:

12...♕e7

This is not really a "King's Indian move", but anyway it is a pleasure to follow Kasparov's play in the following example:

13.a4 ♖fc8 14.♗d2 ♘c5 15.♘xc5 ♖xc5 16.a5

Gaining more space and preparing the unpleasant ♕b3.

16...♕d8 17.♕b3 ♘g4?!

This was a rapid game, so it is understandable that Adams misjudged something.

He should have gone for 17...♖xa5 18.♖xa5 ♕xa5 19.♕xb7 ♕d8, although after 20.♕a6 White would keep better chances.

18.h3 ♗h6 19.♗xh6 ♘xh6 20.♕xb7

White has a healthy extra pawn, Kasparov – Adams, New York (rapid) 1995.

12...b5

This is a double-edged move. Black gets some space on the queenside, but at the same time weakens some squares.

13.a3 ♕b6

Badea – Scalcione, Nereto 2000. Now I developed the following line for White:



14.♗e3!?N ♕b7 15.f3 ♖fc8 16.♖c1

16.♕b3 also comes into consideration.

16...♖c7

Black does not achieve much after: 16...b4 17.♕b3 ♖ab8 18.♘a2!±

17.♘a2 ♖ac8 18.♕d2

White enjoys a pleasant advantage.

13.♗d2 ♖fc8



14.♖c1!N

The most natural and I believe White's best continuation. Up to now he has tried only 14.b4 and 14.a3.

14...♕d8

14...b5 can be met comfortably by 15.a3.

15.♕b3 ♖ab8 16.♕a3 ♕f8 17.f3

White has every chance to develop his initiative on the queenside, while Black is doomed to passivity.

C2) 8...♗e6 9.b3

Another continuation is 9.d5 cxd5 10.cxd5 ♗d7, but here I failed to find an advantage for White. It seems that Black's activity on the queenside fully makes up for White's extra space.

9...d5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♗b2 ♘xc3

Inferior is 11...f5 12.♘a4 ♘d7 13.♘d3 b6 14.e3 ♖c8 15.♖c1 ♘7f6 16.♕e2 with a pleasant edge for White, Badea – Vaidya, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1992.

12.♗xc3



12...♘a6

In case of 12...♘d7 I found the following line: 13.♘d3N (13.e4 allows Black to solve his problems easily by means of 13...c5! 14.♖c1 cxd4 15.♗xd4 ♕a5, Drasko – Roiz, Internet 2004.) The justification for White's last move is seen after the critical 13...c5 14.♘f4! ♗g4 15.h3 cxd4 16.♗xd4 e5 17.hxg4 exd4 18.♗xb7 ♖b8 19.♗f3 and White keeps an extra pawn.

Another line is:

12...♕c8 13.♖c1 ♖d8 14.e3 ♗h3 15.♕c2 ♗xg2 16.♔xg2

16.♘xg2!? might be an interesting alternative.

16...♘d7 17.♘f3 ♕c7

If 17...♘f6 White can play 18.♖fe1 followed by e4.

18.♖fd1 ♖ac8 19.e4 e6

This is a more or less typical position that might arise in this line. White has more space, but Black remains very solid. The following example illustrates the ideas for both sides:

20.♗d2

The bishop has better prospects on the c1-h6 diagonal.

20...♕d6 21.♗g5 f6

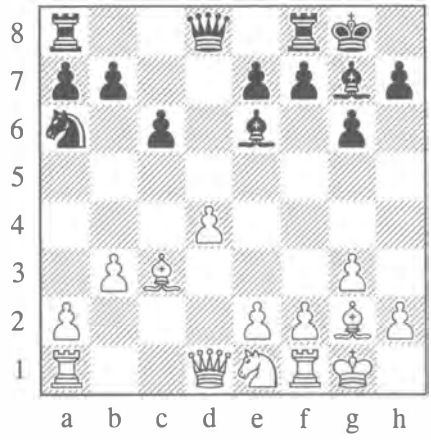
This is already a pleasing sight for White; obviously the pawn on f6 restricts the g7-bishop and exposes the black king slightly.

22.♗e3 ♘b6

This position was reached in Cvitan – Tratar, Rabac 2003. Here I found a way to improve White's play:

23.a4!N f5 24.♗f4 ♕a3 25.♖e1

The game is very complicated, but White retains the better chances.



13.♖c1!N

This natural move seems to be White's best.

So far White only seems to have tried 13.e3 ♗d5 14.♖c1 (After 14.e4 ♗e6 Black's pressure against the d4-pawn gives him good play, for instance 15.♕d2 ♘c7 16.♖d1 ♘b5 17.♗b2 ♕b6) 14...♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♕d5† 16.♕f3 ♕xf3† 17.♔xf3 and here the draw was agreed in Mikhalchishin – Tratar, Sibenik 2007.

13...♘c7 14.e3 ♗d5

I also examined 14...♘b5 15.♗b2 ♗d5 16.♘d3 (After 16.f3 I found 16...♗h6! a bit annoying) 16...♗xg2 17.♔xg2 ♕d5† 18.f3± with a slight pull.

15.e4

The most ambitious, although also possible is: 15.♘d3 ♗xg2 16.♔xg2 a5 17.♕c2 with slight space advantage in the centre.

15...♗e6 16.a4!?

Preventing a possible knight jump to b5.

16...f5!?

This is not forced, but it is certainly the most principled way for Black to play. Against quieter responses White's strong centre would guarantee a pleasant edge.

17.♘d3 fxe4 18.♘c5 ♖b8 19.♘xe4 ♘d5 20.♗b2±

I regard White's position as preferable, as he can easily generate pressure along the e-file.

D) 7...a6

This is not a popular option at grandmaster level, but it has still been tried many times in practice.

8.e4 b5 9.e5

The most challenging idea.



9...♘e8

Black has a few other possibilities:

9...♘fd7

This looks like the natural retreat, but may in fact be the inferior option.

10.♗f4 b4

10...dxe5 11.dxe5 ♘c5 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♖fd1 ♖e8 14.♘d4 leads to a very unpleasant position for Black.

10...♘b6 runs into the strong 11.c5! dxc5

12.dxc5 ♕xd1 13.♖fxd1 ♘6d7 14.♘e4 and again Black is under serious pressure.

11.♘a4 dxe5 12.dxe5 ♕a5 13.♖e1 ♘b6 14.♘xb6 ♕xb6 15.♗e3± White has a clear positional edge, Kveinys – Edvardsson, Reykjavik 2007.

9...dxe5 10.♘xe5 bxc4 11.♘xc4 ♗e6 12.♘e5 ♗d5



13.♘xd5N

Despite repairing Black's pawn structure, I believe White should take the opportunity for this favourable swap.

Black has got a reasonable position after 13.♕a4 ♗xg2 14.♔xg2 ♘d5, Mednis – Pacis, Manila 1991.

13...cxd5 14.♗e3 e6 15.♖c1 ♕b6

Black is not helped by 15...♘bd7 16.♕a4 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♘d7 18.f4 ♘b6 19.♕d4 ♘c4 20.♗f2 intending 21.b3.

16.♕c2 ♘bd7 17.♕c6

White has clearly better chances.

10.♕e2 bxc4

Black has tried some other moves as well:

10...♘c7 11.♖d1 bxc4 (After 11...d5 12.b3 h6, Spassov – Krnic, Vrnjacka Banja 1984, White can obtain a clear positional advantage with: 13.♗e3!N ♗e6 14.♕d2 ♔h7 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♖ac1) 12.♕xc4 ♗e6 13.♕a4 h6 14.♗f4 g5 15.♗d2 ♕d7 16.h4 g4 17.♘e1 ♖a7 18.♘d3 and White was much better in Zhidkov – S. Farago, Budapest 2003.

10...♗g4 11.h3!?

Less convincing is 11.♗f4 ♘c7, Itkis – Badea, Bucharest 1996.

11...♗xf3 12.♗xf3 bxc4

Black had better grab a pawn, otherwise he will just have a bad position; the combination of advancing the queenside pawns followed by exchanging the light-squared bishop does not make a favourable impression.

For instance, after 12...♘c7 13.♗e3 dxe5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♖ad1 ♕c8 16.♗h6 ♗g7 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.♕xe7± Black's position looks horrible.

13.♕xc4 dxe5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♖d1



White has powerful compensation for the missing pawn, thanks to his pair of bishops and Black's vulnerable queenside structure.

15...♕a5 16.♗d2 ♗g7

This allows an elegant idea.

Relatively best would have been 16...♕c7, although after 17.♖ac1 ♖a7 18.♕e2! ♘f6 19.♘a4 White maintains excellent compensation for the pawn. His chances are clearly better.

17.♘d5! cxd5

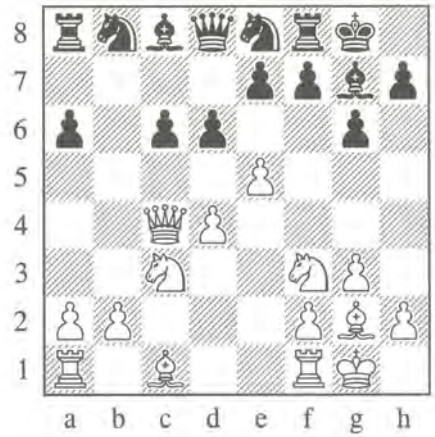
Maybe Black was planning 17...♕d8, but after 18.♗f4! cxd5 19.♗xd5 ♘d6 20.♗xd6 ♖a7 21.♗a3 ♖d7 22.♖ac1 White's advantage is obvious.

18.♗xa5 dxc4 19.♗xa8 ♘d6 20.♖d2±

White convincingly converted his material advantage in Terreaux – Weiss, internet 2003.

11.♕xc4

This is the main position in the present line.



11...d5

Black has a wide choice. Here are some other possibilities:

11...♘c7 12.exd6 exd6 13.♗g5 ♕d7 14.♖fe1!? (This looks better than 14.d5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 cxd5 16.♕xd5 ♗b7 17.♕d2 ♘c6 with a playable position for Black, Csom – F. Portisch, Budapest 1976.) 14...d5 This was played in Thesing – Schoene Germany 1997, and now after 15.♕a4N ♘e6 16.♗e3 a5 17.♖ac1 ♗b7 18.♘g5± White has definite pressure.

11...♗e6 12.♕a4 ♘c7 13.♖e1 h6 14.exd6 exd6 15.♗f4 g5 was Ljavdansky – Suetin, Tallinn 1965, and now the simple 16.♗e3N ♕d7 17.♖ac1 would have maintained White's advantage.

11...a5 12.♖e1 ♗e6 (12...♗a6 is hardly an improvement: 13.♕a4 d5 14.♗d2 ♕b6 15.♕c2 and White's positional advantage is undisputable, Ruck – Suskovic, Zagreb 1999.) 13.♕a4 ♘c7 This position occurred in Dorfman – Kr. Georgiev, Warsaw 1983. Now I suggest:



14.exd6!?N exd6 15.♗f4 ♕d7 16.♖ac1 maintaining the pressure.

12.♕a4 ♘c7 13.♗e3 ♘b5 14.♖ac1 ♘d7 15.♕c2

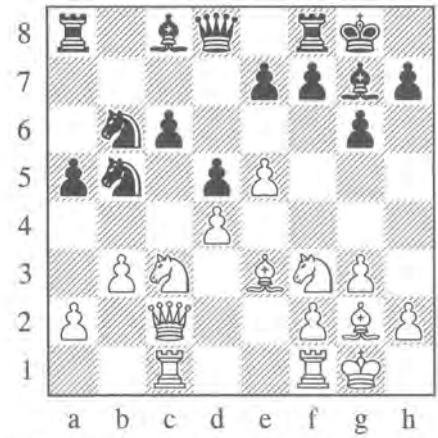
Intending to follow with ♘a4.

15...♘b6 16.b3

It is essential to take control over the c4-square, thus restricting the knight on b6.

16...a5

This occurred in Lempert – Kozlov, Moscow 1990. The cleanest way for White would be:



17.♕d2!N a4 18.♘xb5 cxb5 19.♖c5 ♗d7 20.♖fc1±

With a nice advantage.

E) 7...♗g4

Nowadays this is a rare guest in tournament practice and rightly so, as Black can hardly hope to equalize without his light-squared bishop.

8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♗xf3 ♘bd7

The alternative is:

9...e5 10.d5 c5

Closing the position also does not promise Black adequate play.

11.e4 ♘a6

Black has also tried 11...♘e8 but without much success. 12.h4! This is the most effective way of fighting against the ...f7-f5 advance. 12...f5 13.h5 f4 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♗g4 White's light-squared bishop effectively enters into the action. 15...♗h6 16.♔g2 ♔g7 17.♖h1 ♗g5

This was Sturua – Bloess, Hamburg 1999. Now very strong would have been 18.♕f3!N ♘f6 (Black cannot play 18...fxg3 19.♗xg5 ♕xg5 20.♖h7†! ♔xh7 21.♕xf8 when he is helpless against the coming ♖h1.) 19.♗e6 ♘bd7 20.♘e2 ♘h5 21.♖xh5! gxh5 22.♗f5 and White has a powerful initiative for the exchange.

12.a3 ♘c7 13.♔g2 ♘d7 14.h4!

Again we see this well known idea.

14...f5 15.h5 f4 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♗d2 ♕g5 18.♖h1 ♔f7 19.b4 ♖h8 20.♕a4! ♘b6 21.♕b3 ♖xh1 22.♖xh1 ♘d7 23.♖h4!±

White obtained a clear advantage in Tukmakov – Klaric, Zadar 1997.

10.e4 e5 11.d5 c5

Having relinquished the bishop pair, Black usually elects to close the position.

12.♔g2

The following game also provides a nice illustration of White's chances: 12.a3 ♔h8 13.h4 h5 Preventing h4-h5, but the problem for Black is that ...f7-f5 is now practically impossible to achieve. Thus White can slowly prepare his play on the queenside without worrying about counterplay on the opposite flank. 14.♗g5 ♘b6 15.♗e2 ♕d7 16.♔g2 ♖ae8 17.b4 ♘h7 18.♗e3 ♖c8 19.bxc5 dxc5 20.a4 ♘f6 21.♕b3 ♘a8 22.a5± Rochev – Fox, Bunratty 2001.

12...♘e8 13.h4 f5 14.h5 ♘ef6 15.♖h1

White is steadily building the pressure. Over the next few moves Black made a few unfortunate decisions and quickly fell into hopeless position, but his position would have been unenviable regardless.

15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♕f6 18.♗e3 g5 19.h6 ♗xh6 20.♕h5

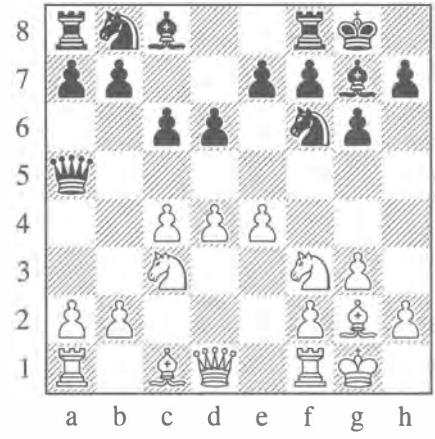
White is already winning, Georgiev – Illi, Lugano 1986.

F) 7...♕a5

This is Black's most popular plan after 6...c6.

8.e4

The main alternative is 8.h3, but here instead of 8...e5, which after 9.e4 transposes to line F3 below, Black has two interesting alternatives in 8...♗e6 and 8...♕a6.



Here Black has three main moves: **F1) 8...♗g4**, **F2) 8...♕h5** and **F3) 8...e5**.

8...♗e6

It has already noted that this move was a respectable answer to 8.h3, but in the present position it does not make a favourable impression.

9.d5

The most ambitious continuation.

9...♗g4

Black should refrain from capturing on d5, as after 9...cxd5 10.exd5! the e7-pawn becomes an obvious target. 10...♗d7 11.♕e2 ♖e8 12.♗d2 ♕d8 13.♗e3 ♕c8 14.♖ac1 ♘g4 15.♗d4 e5 16.dxe6 ♖xe6 17.♕d1± and White's positional advantage is beyond any doubts, Badea – Teodorescu, Herculane 1996.

10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♖c8

If 11...♘bd7 12.♗d2 ♘e5 13.♗e2± White keeps all his pluses.

12.♗d2 ♘fd7 13.♗e2 ♕b6 14.♖b1 a5 15.♗e3 ♕c7

This happened in Blagojevic – Arsovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1998. Now I found the following strong idea:



16.h4!N ♘a6

If 16...h5 Black should worry about 17.g4!? hxg4 18.♗xg4 followed by h4-h5. White has good chances to develop a dangerous offensive.

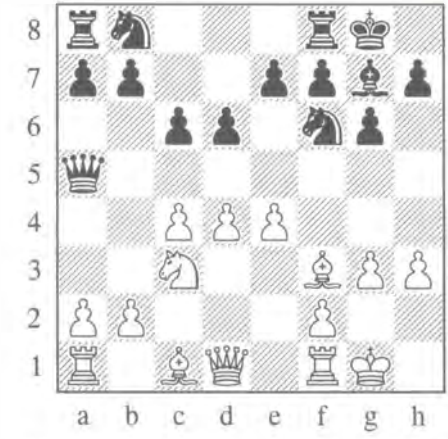
17.h5 ♘ac5 18.♕c2

White has an excellent position, with more space, two bishops and active possibilities on both sides of the board.

F1) 8...♗g4

I find it doubtful that Black can equalize by giving up his light-squared bishop.

9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3



There are three main tries: **F11) 10...♘bd7**, **F12) 10...♘fd7** and **F13) 10...e5**.

F11) 10...♘bd7 11.♕e2!?

This flexible continuation seems to me very interesting. The most popular move is 11.♗e3, but after 11...c5 12.d5 ♕b4 13.♕b3 ♘b6 14.♗e2 a5 Black has reasonable counterplay.

11...♘e8

In case of 11...e5 12.d5 cxd5 13.cxd5 a6 14.♗d2 ♖fc8 15.♖fc1 we reach a position from line F13. Meanwhile 11...c5? runs into the strong 12.e5! and Black is in trouble.

12.♖d1 c5

Another line is:

12...♘c7 13.♗e3 ♘e6 14.♗g2

I also found 14.♗g4!? quite interesting, with the idea to meet 14...h5 with 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.e5! dxe5 17.d5± with promising compensation for the pawn.

14...♖fe8 15.♖ac1 c5 16.dxc5 ♘dxc5

This is the position for which both sides were aiming. Black carried out the intended ...c6-c5 and has won some space for his pieces, but White has mobilized his forces in almost optimal way and in my opinion obtained the better prospects, with a space advantage and pair of bishops. The following game is a good example:

17.♖c2

This modest move prepares the ♘d5 jump, as the a2-pawn will now be untouchable in view of b2-b4, winning material.

17...♖ac8 18.♘d5 ♘d7 19.b3 a6

Somewhat stronger would have been 19...♘e5, although White retain better chances after 20.h4 ♘c6 21.♗h3.

20.h4 ♕d8 21.h5 ♘f6 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♗h3

Black is under serious pressure, Izoria – Banikas, Yerevan 2000.

13.dxc5 ♗xc3

If 13...♘xc5 White has the strong 14.b4! ♕xb4 15.♘d5 ♕a4 16.♘xe7† ♔h8 17.♖b1 with advantage.

14.cxd6 ♘xd6



15.♖d5!?N

This intermediate move is an improvement over 15.bxc3 ♘e5 16.♗g2 ♘exc4 and Black has a decent game, Baburin – Kaufman, New York 1997.

15...♘c5

The alternative is 15...b5 16.bxc3 ♕xc3 (If 16...♘b6 17.c5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♘c4 [18...♘f5 19.♗b2±] 19.♗h6 ♕xc3 20.♖e1 White has more than sufficient compensation for the exchange.) 17.♗b2 ♕xc4 18.♕xc4 ♘xc4 19.♖xd7 ♘xb2 20.♖b1 ♘c4 21.♖xb5 e6 22.♖c5 ♘b6 23.♖b7 ♖fb8 24.♖bc7 The endgame looks difficult for Black.

16.bxc3 ♕xc3 17.♖b1!

This is much stronger than 17.♗b2 ♕xc4 18.♕xc4 ♘xc4 19.♖xc5 ♘xb2 20.♖b5 ♘c4 21.♖xb7 e6 when Black has good chances to hold the endgame.

17...♖ac8 18.♗h6 ♖fd8

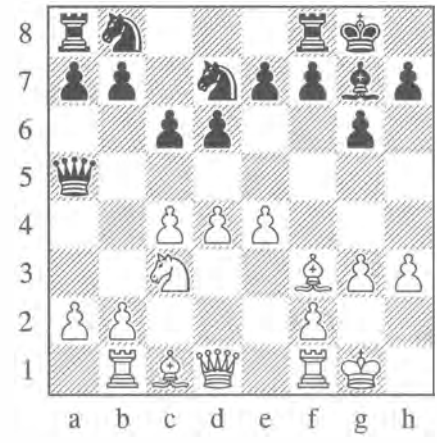
18...♖fe8 19.♗g4 ♘e6 20.e5 ♘xc4 21.♖xb7 also leaves Black with some problems to solve.

19.♖bd1 ♘e6 20.♗g4!

White keeps the initiative.

F12) 10...♘fd7 11.♖b1!

The more common 11.♗e3 ♕b4 12.♕b3 a5 looks less convincing to me.



11...c5

There are some alternatives:

11...♕b4 12.♗e2 ♕b6 13.♗e3 looks absolutely senseless, as Black just lost a few tempos jumping with his queen. White has clearly better chances, Aronian – Ahn, Batumi 1999.

11...a6 is very passive and allows White to seize the initiative. 12.b4 ♕c7 13.♗g5 ♖e8 14.♕d2 e5 15.d5 a5 These moves occurred in A. Petrosian – Micic, Dortmund 1998, and now I propose 16.b5!N with the following nice idea: 16...c5 17.b6! ♘xb6 18.♘b5 ♕d7 19.♗g4 f5 20.exf5 h5 21.♗e2 gxf5 22.♗xh5 ♖f8 23.♕e2 with a huge positional advantage.

11...♘a6 12.a3

White insists on playing b2-b4.

12...c5

This position has occurred a couple of times in practice. Now I found a nice improvement:



13.dxc5!N ♕xc5 14.e5!

I really like the idea of activating our light-squared bishop.

14...♕xc4

14...♘xe5 15.♗xb7 ♕xc4 16.♗xa8 ♖xa8 17.♘d5 can hardly promise Black any compensation for being the exchange down.

15.exd6 exd6 16.♗xb7 ♖ab8 17.♗d5 ♕c8 18.♘e4

White enjoys a pleasant positional advantage, thanks to his bishop pair and better pawn structure.

12.d5 ♗xc3

This is certainly a principled move, although there are a number of alternatives.

12...♘b6 13.♗e2 ♘8d7 14.a3!

A strong and concrete approach. Less clear is 14.♕c2 ♘e5.

14...♕a6

This leads to passive position for Black.

More critical would be 14...♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♕xc3 16.♗b2 ♕a5 keeping an extra pawn, although after 17.♕c1⩲ White has powerful compensation and a much easier position to handle in practice.

15.♘b5

This position was reached in Goldin – Har Zvi, Rishon Le Zion 1995. I believe this is the right moment to stop and evaluate the situation on the board. White's chances are clearly preferable; he has two bishops and a space advantage, while the Black pieces are rather oddly placed on the queenside.

12...a6

This can be met strongly by:

13.♗e2! ♘f6

Black's problem is that the desirable 13...b5 does not work out well after: 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♗xb5 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♕xc3 17.a4± Despite the material balance White's bishop pair should be the deciding factor.

14.a4 ♕d8 15.♗g5 e6

Izoria – Paragua, Heraklio 2002. White's position is better after almost any sensible move, but I like the following idea the most: 16.dxe6!N fxe6 17.e5! dxe5 18.♕xd8 ♖xd8 19.♗g4 ♔f7

Or 19...♘c6 20.♗xe6† ♔h8 21.♗d5 with advantage.

20.f4!

White has a serious initiative.

12...♕b4 13.♗g5 ♗f6

13...♘b6 is senseless, as was correctly indicated by Hillarp Persson, as after 14.♗e2 Black cannot take on c4, because of the following variation: 14...♘xc4 15.a3 ♘xa3 16.♘a2! ♕xe4 17.bxa3+–

13...f6 14.♗d2 ♕xc4 also does not work after: 15.♗e2 ♕d4 (15...♕b4 16.♘b5 ♕xe4 17.♘c7 leads to the same position) 16.♘b5 ♕xe4 17.♘c7± Again this line was given by Hillarp Persson in *ChessBase Magazine* 69.

14.♗xf6

This move is so far the only one to have been tried in practice, but also very interesting is Marin's suggestion: 14.♗h6!? ♗g7 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♗e2±.

14...exf6

If 14...♘xf6 15.♗e2 White has better chances, as he has a clear plan of preparing the advance of his central pawns (f and e), while Black's play is very unclear.

15.♘b5!

I like this energetic move, even though after the modest 15.♗e2 White's chances are preferable as well, Marin – Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 1999.

15...a6 16.a3 ♕a5 17.b4 ♕b6 18.♘c3 ♕c7

After 18...cxb4 19.axb4 ♕c7 20.♗e2 White obtained a clear advantage in D. Bekker Jensen – Engelbert, Gausdal 2000.

19.♗e2 ♖e8 20.♕b3 ♖a7 21.♔g2

White retains a stable edge, although the black position remains fairly solid, Schlosser – Prusikin, Passau 1996.

13.bxc3 ♕xa2

Also possible is 13...♕xc3, although the obvious drawback is that Black is clearing the a1-h8 diagonal for this opponent's now unopposed dark-squared bishop, which White exploited brutally in the following game. 14.♗e2 b6 15.♗b2 ♕a5 16.f4 ♕xa2 17.♕c2 (17.h4 b5 18.cxb5 ♘b6 gave Black some counterplay in Rausis – Gross, Cairo 2002.) 17...♕a6 18.e5 ♕b7 (18...♕c8 does not really help after 19.♗g4) 19.♕c3 dxe5 20.fxe5 f6 21.exf6 exf6 22.♗g4 ♕c7 23.♖be1 ♕d8



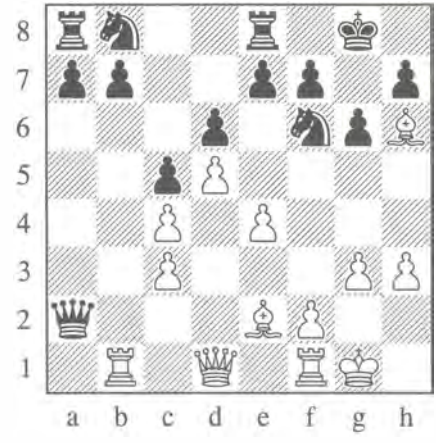
24.♗f3! b5 25.d6 ♘b6 26.♕d2 ♘8d7 27.♗d5† ♘xd5 28.♕xd5† ♔h8 29.♖e7 1–0 Lemke – Melson, e-mail 2000.

14.♗h6!

In my opinion White should be striving to develop his initiative on the kingside and in the centre, without being sidetracked by the thought of regaining the sacrificed material. After 14.♖xb7 ♖e8 15.♖b3 ♘b6 16.♗e2 ♕a4 Black gets some counterplay, Bates – Snape, West Bromwich 2004.

14...♖e8 15.♗e2 ♘f6

This position was reached in Vaganian – Kozul, Pula 1997. Now I would like to follow Dautov's recommendation from *ChessBase Magazine 57.*



16.♗d3N

He gives the following defensive idea for Black:

16...♕a6 17.f4 ♘bd7 18.♕e2 ♔h8

Black intends to follow with ...♘g8. Dautov evaluates the position as unclear, but I find it hard to believe Black can withstand White's offensive after a continuation such as the following:

19.e5 ♘g8 20.e6 fxe6 21.dxe6 ♘df6 22.♗g5

Intending 23.f5. Black's position looks very difficult.

F13) 10...e5 11.d5 cxd5

Unlike the stereotypical King's Indian positions, here Black intends to fight for the initiative on the queenside. It is the only way to make any sense of his position, especially the position of his queen.

12.cxd5 ♘bd7 13.♗d2 ♖fc8 14.♕e2 a6



We have reached a typical early middlegame position for this variation. As I have already mentioned, I do not rate very highly Black's strategy of giving away his light-squared bishop. He is very much in the game of course, but White's space advantage and bishop pair are both long-term trumps.

From here, Black will usually try to force the trade of the dark-squared bishops by means of ...h5, ...♔h7 and ...♗h6, or ...♕f8 and ...♗h6. White will strive to avoid this exchange, while also preparing to transfer his own "bad" bishop to the h3-c8 diagonal. Let us now see how these ideas might play out in practice.

15.♖fc1

White can also begin an immediate transfer of the light-squared bishop with: 15.♗g2 ♕d8 16.h4 ♕f8 17.♗h3 ♗h6 (This idea does not work well for Black. Best would have been the modest 17...♖c7±) 18.♗g5! ♖c7 19.♖ac1 ♖ac8?! Under pressure, Black squanders a pawn. 20.♗xf6! ♘xf6 21.♗xc8 ♗xc1 22.♗xb7! ♖xb7 23.♖xc1± Izoria – Khismatullin, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

15...♕d8 16.h4 h5 17.♗g2 ♖c7

This position was reached in Marin – Grigore, Bucharest 1998. Now I would seriously consider:

18.♖c2!?N ♖ac8 19.♖ac1±

Followed by ♗h3. It is much easier to play with White, thanks to his spatial superiority.

F2) 8...♕h5 9.♘g5

I prefer this to 9.e5 dxe5 10.♘xe5, which is the most popular reaction.



9...♕xd1

Black has other options:

After 9...h6 10.♕xh5 ♘xh5 11.♘f3, it is worth examining two continuations.

a) 11...♗e6

Here I discovered an interesting idea:



12.e5!?N

The idea is to restrict Black's knight on h5. Both games that reached this position continued 12.d5, but I am not so keen to open the long diagonal for the g7-bishop.

12...♘d7

If 12...♗xc4 13.g4 ♗xf1 14.♗xf1 dxe5 15.dxe5 ♘d7 16.gxh5 g5 17.h4 g4 18.♘h2 ♘xe5 19.♗f4 I rate White's chances as higher.

13.♖e1 dxe5 14.♘xe5! ♖fe8

After 14...♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♖fd8 16.h3 the threat of 17.g4 is very annoying.

15.h3

The immediate 15.♘xg6 is not dangerous for Black in view of: 15...♗xd4∞

15...♖ad8

If 15...♘hf6 the tactical idea works well: 16.♘xg6 ♗xc4 17.b3! ♗e6 18.♗a3 with initiative.

16.g4 ♗xe5 17.dxe5 ♘g7 18.b3

Less convincing is 18.♗xh6 ♗xc4 19.b3 ♗a6.

18...h5 19.f3 ♘c5 20.♗g5±

White's bishop's pair could prove to be an important asset in the long run.

b) 11... ♘a6 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.b3

In this complex position White maintains better chances, due to his space advantage. The following example illustrates his possibilities quite well:

13...g5 14.♖fd1 f5 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♘e1 ♘f6 17.h3 ♘c7 18.♖ac1 ♘d7

This was Vasquez – Hamilton, Siegen 1970. Here White should have continued:

19.♘d3N ♖ad8 20.d5 c5 21.f4

Retaining better chances.

9...♘a6 10.h3

The natural and useful move virtually forces Black to trade queens in view of the threatened g3-g4.

10...♕xd1 11.♖xd1 e5



12.♘f3!N

This seems like the most natural move, as the knight on g5 does not have much to do.

After 12.♗e3 exd4 13.♗xd4 ♖e8! Black is threatening ...h7-h6 and I do not see a comfortable way of defending the e4-pawn.

12...exd4

After 12...♖e8 it looks good close the centre with 13.d5. I often favour this idea in response to Black's ...♖e8, in order to emphasize the fact that he has just wasted a tempo. 13...cxd5 14.cxd5 Even without

queens White's space advantage is significant here, for instance 14...♗d7 15.♗e3 ♖ec8 16.♗f1 ♘c5 17.♘d2 with better chances.

13.♘xd4 ♖e8

I also analysed the following alternatives:

13...♘c5 14.♘b3 ♖e8 15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.f4 ♗e6 17.e5 ♘d7 18.♘e4 White is obviously better.

13...♘d7 14.♘de2 ♘e5 15.b3 f5 16.♖xd6 fxe4 17.♗e3 ♘f3† 18.♔h1 and Black is about to lose his central pawn.

14.♘b3 ♘d7

14...♗f8 15.♗f4 ♖e6 looks awfully passive.

15.♖xd6 ♘b6

No better is 15...♘ac5 16.♘xc5 ♘xc5 17.♗e3 ♗xc3 18.bxc3 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 ♖xe4 20.♖d8† ♔g7 21.♖e1 f5 22.f3 ♖e6 23.♔f2 and White's initiative should be decisive.

16.♗f1 ♗e5 17.♗f4 ♗xd6 18.♗xd6

White has powerful compensation for the exchange, with much more active minor pieces.

10.♖xd1



10...e5

Black had better establish a pawn in the centre while he has the chance. Too passive is:

10...♘bd7 11.f4

White grabs more space in the centre.

11...♘b6

Clearly inferior is 11...c5? 12.e5! cxd4 13.exf6 exf6 14.♘xh7 ♔xh7 Zifroni – Chytilek, Siofok 1996. Now after the simple 15.♖xd4N f5 16.♖xd6± White is just a pawn up.

Here I found a way to improve over the game Becking – Enzmann, Schoeneck 1996.



12.c5!N

A very energetic and strong idea. Black faces serious problems, for example:

12...♘c4 13.b3 ♗g4 14.♘f3 ♘a5 15.cxd6 exd6 16.e5 ♘e8 17.♗a3

With an obvious advantage.

11.d5 c5

Black can also try opening the queenside:

11...cxd5 12.cxd5

12.exd5!?N might be an interesting alternative.

12...a6 13.a4 a5?

Chiburdanidze – Mona, Abu Dhabi 2007. Black's last move was an unfortunate decision. Now both sides have potential outposts on the queenside, but White is in a much better position to take advantage of them.

Better would have been 13...♘bd7, but still after 14.♖a3 b6 15.♘f3± White retains better chances.

14.♘b5N

A minor improvement over the game.

14...♘e8 15.♘f3 ♗g4

Or 15...♘a6 16.♘d2± followed by ♘c4.

16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♗xf3 ♘a6 18.♗e3

Black faces a depressing struggle to defend.

12.a3

Planning a standard queenside attack.

12...♘e8 13.b4 ♘d7 14.♖b1 b6 15.♘b5!? ♘df6 16.♖e1 h6 17.♘f3 ♗d7 18.♗d2 ♘h7 19.a4

White is slowly increasing the pressure, while Black lacks any trace of counterplay, Khismatullin – Gabdrakhmanov, Kazan 2007.

F3) 8...e5 9.h3



Now the main options are **F31) 9...exd4** and **F32) 9...♘bd7**.

Besides these, there are a few minor lines to check out:

9...♗e6

As usual I am rather sceptical about the idea of provoking d4-d5 at the cost of a tempo.

10.d5 cxd5 11.cxd5 ♗d7 12.♗e3

We have already spent some time investigating similar positions, so I will refrain from analysing this in much detail and instead show one model example.

12...♖c8

12...♘a6 13.a3! reaches the line 9...♘a6 10.♗e3 ♗e6 11.d5 cxd5 12.cxd5 ♗d7 13.a3! below.

13.♘d2 ♘a6 14.♘b3

14.a3!? has been played a few times, and also deserves consideration.

14...♕d8 15.♕e2 ♗e8

Portisch – Kavalek, Skopje 1972. Here I developed the following variation:



16.♖fc1!?N ♘d7 17.♘b5 ♘dc5 18.♘xc5 ♘xc5 19.♖c2

White can easily continue to build his queenside initiative, without any fear of counterplay on the opposite flank.

9...♘a6 10.♗e3 exd4

Most popular move is 10...♗e6 11.d5 (Most games saw 11.♕e2 but I do not see any reason to refrain from the central advance) 11...cxd5 12.cxd5 ♗d7 13.a3! (it is useful to prevent 13...♘c5) 13...♘c7 Black wishes to activate his misplaced knight via the b5-square. 14.b4 ♕a6 15.a4! A very strong and concrete approach. 15...♕c4 16.♕c2 ♘a6 17.♘d2 ♕xb4?! (A bad decision; much better was 17...♕c8 18.b5 ♘c5 19.♘c4 ♕c7, although it is obvious that after 20.a5 b6 21.♖fc1 White retain better chances.) 18.♖fb1 ♕a5 19.♘c4 ♕c7 20.♘b5 ♗xb5 21.axb5 ♘c5 22.♘xd6! White has a large strategic advantage, Maherramzade – Guliyev, Baku 2000.

11.♘xd4 ♖e8 12.♖e1

Now it is obvious that the combination of Black's queen on a5 and knight on a6 is rather unfortunate for Black. No wonder he has twice opted for the passive:

12...♕c7

Black's main problem is that 12...♘c5 is met strongly by 13.♘b3! ♘xb3 14.axb3 ♕c7 15.♗xa7! and White wins a pawn.

13.♕d2 ♘c5 14.♗f4 ♘h5 15.♗e3 ♘f6 16.♗f4 ♘h5 17.♗g5 a5 18.♖ad1±

White has got a pleasant position in Mikhalchishin – Martinovic, Baku 1980.

9...♖e8 10.♗e3

The standard 10.d5 is also promising, but I found it interesting to study another line.

10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘bd7 12.♖e1 ♘b6?!

It would have been better for Black to attack the c-pawn from another direction: 12...♘e5 and after 13.♗f1 we reach a position from line F322.

13.c5!

A very nice tactical trick.

13...♘c4

If 13...dxc5 14.♘b3 White gains too many tempos attacking Black's queen. 14...♕a6 15.♘xc5 ♕a5 16.♘b3 ♕b4 17.♗c5 ♕c4 18.♗f1 ♕e6 19.f4±

14.♘b3 ♕d8 15.cxd6 ♘xd6

It was necessary to swap queens by means of 15...♕xd6, though after 16.♕xd6 ♘xd6 17.♖ad1 ♘c4 18.♗c1± White enjoys a pleasant edge.

16.♗d4 ♘c4 17.♕c2 ♗e6 18.♖ad1 ♕e7 19.f4 ♘b6 20.♘c5

White was clearly better in Polugaevsky – Uhlmann, Amsterdam 1972.

F31) 9...exd4 10.♘xd4

10...♕c5

This is an important line which has been played a few times by Mikhail Tal, although once again there are some other options.

10...♘bd7?!

This is probably the worst of the bunch.

11.♘de2!

The attack on d6 is rather awkward to meet, whilst the c4-pawn can now easily be protected with b2-b3.

White could obviously have played 11.♖e1 transposing to line F32, but the text is stronger.

11...♕c7 12.♗e3 ♖e8 13.♕c2 b6 14.♖ad1 ♗a6 15.b3 ♖ad8 16.♖d2

Black failed to find any counterplay, Stohl – Banikas, Istanbul 2000. When that happens, as a rule White will always stand better in this pawn structure thanks to his extra space, more active pieces and pressure in the centre.

10...♖e8

I only found three games in which this move was played.



11.♗f4!N

I believe this to be a strong novelty. Less clear is 11.♖e1 ♗e6!? 12.♘xe6 ♖xe6.

11...♕b4

I do not really consider 11...♗f8 to be a serious option, as it would be a clear admission that Black has lost the opening battle.

12.♘c2

12.♕b3!? is an interesting alternative that deserves investigation.

12...♕xc4

Obviously the b2-pawn is untouchable: 12...♕xb2?? 13.♘a4+–

13.♖e1!

The point. White is in no hurry to capture on d6 and instead vacates the f1-square for his bishop.

Premature would be 13.♗xd6? ♖d8 followed by 14...♘e8.

13...♕a6

If 13...♖d8 then 14.e5! is very strong, for instance 14...♘h5 (or 14...♘e8 15.♗g5 f6 16.exf6 ♘xf6 17.♖e7!↑) 15.♗f1 ♕c5 16.♗g5 ♖d7 17.♗e3 ♕a5 18.exd6 ♕d8 19.♘e4 and White is clearly better, due to his passed pawn.

14.♕xd6 ♗e6 15.♕d2 ♘bd7 16.♘d4 ♘b6 17.♘xe6 ♖xe6 18.b3±

White has pleasant advantage, thanks to his bishop pair and better placed pieces.

10...♘e8

This is too passive; White has no problems in dealing with the ...♕c5 idea.

11.♗e3 ♕b4 12.♕e2 ♗e6

Black could have won the c4-pawn, but the price is too high: 12...♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗e6 14.♕d2 White simply abandons the c4-pawn to its fate, in order to develop a kingside attack. 14...♕xc4 Bagaturov – Mrdja, Porto San Giorgio 2001. Here I found a strong improvement: 15.b3! It is important to play this move first, as now Black is forced to retreat his queen to an inferior square. 15...♕a6 (The generally desirable 15...♕b4? loses to 16.♘d5!) 16.f4 f6 17.e5 with a powerful attack.

13.♘xe6 fxe6 14.a3 ♕b3

Cvitan – Rukavina, Pula 2002, now I improved White's play:

15.♖fd1N ♘d7

This is the natural response, but there is an unpleasant surprise in store:

16.c5! ♘xc5 17.e5±

10...♕b4 11.♘c2

I think this is White's best option. Black has interesting counterplay after 11.♕e2 b5!.

11...♕xc4 12.♕xd6

Having worked a lot on this variation I noticed that the trade of c4- and d6-pawns usually favours White. His pieces have more space in which to operate, and the extra central pawn will generally be a lot more influential than Black's extra c-pawn.

12...♘a6 13.♗e3 ♖e8 14.♖fd1 ♕e6

This position was reached in Trois – Chevaldonnet, Reggio Emilia 1980. Here it is important for White to keep the queens on the board, since an exchange would really help to ease the congestion within Black's position.



15.♕d2!N ♕e7 16.♗f4 ♗e6 17.♗d6 ♕d8 18.♖ac1

White keeps the better chances.

11.♘de2

After a serious investigation of this variation I came to the conclusion that the text move is the one that gives the highest chances for a white advantage. 11.♘b3 has been more popular, but I found 11...♕b4! to be enough for Black to obtain reasonable play.

11...♕xc4

If 11...♖d8 12.b3 White's space advantage promises him better chances, for instance

12...♘a6 13.a3 ♕e5, which occurred in the game Heurung – Fishbein, Chicago 1991, and now the simple 14.♗e3 ♘c5 15.♕c2 ♖e8 16.f3 would promise White better chances.



12.♕xd6 ♘a6

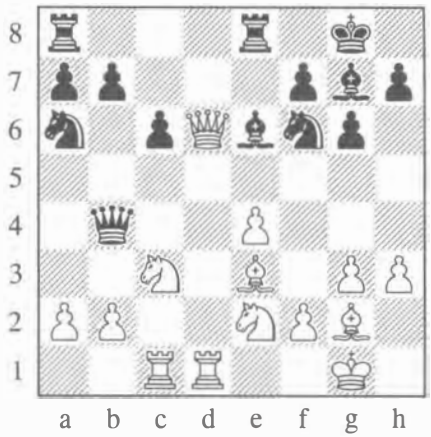
Black has also tried 12...♘e8 13.♕f4!? f5 (This appears fairly logical, but White is ready for it. Relatively best would have been 13...♗e6, although after 14.♗e3 ♘d7 15.♖fd1 I still prefer White's position.) 14.exf5 ♕xf4 15.♗xf4 ♗xf5 16.♖ad1! Black's minor pieces suffer from a severe shortage of space. 16...♘a6 17.♘d4 White was clearly better, Janjgava – Bagaturov, Ankara 1995.

13.♗e3

Also worth considering is 13.b3 ♕e6 14.♗a3 ♖e8 15.♖ad1 ♕xd6 16.♗xd6 ♗e6 17.f4 and White maintains a typical edge for this pawn structure, Pavlovic – Krnic, Yugoslavia 1981.

13...♖e8 14.♖ac1 ♗e6 15.♖fd1 ♕b4

We have been following the game Cordara – Fierro Baquero, Cannes 2007. Up to now both sides have made very natural moves, and here White could have continued the good work with:



16.♘f4!N ♕xd6 17.♖xd6 ♗f8 18.♖d2 ♗c8 19.♘d3±

White has a small but stable advantage.

F32) 9...♘bd7

This is the most popular continuation.

10.♖e1



Now we reach a further division in the material. We will analyse: **F321) 10...♖e8** and **F322) 10...exd4**, after first checking a few minor alternatives.

10...b5 11.cxb5 cxb5 12.a4!

This principled reaction should lead to a fine position.

12...b4 13.♘b5 ♘e8 14.dxe5 dxe5

The best chance for Black appears to be 14...♘xe5, although after 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.♗e3 ♗e6 17.♕e2 ♘f6 18.♘d6! White retains a pleasant advantage.

15.♗e3 a6 16.♘a7!

Black was already facing severe problems, Dizdar – Klinova, New York 1997.

10...♕b4



This is rare guest in modern tournament practice, but it is important to examine it, just in case.

11.♗f1

The only way to defend the c-pawn, but it is good enough.

11...exd4 12.♘xd4

Black's queen appears to be misplaced on b4, and will soon have to waste time avoiding threats.

12...♖e8

Too passive is 12...♘e8 13.a3 ♕c5 14.♗e3± Vijayalakshmi – Son, Kuala Lumpur 2005.

More interesting, but still hardly sufficient for equality, is 12...♘e5 13.♘c2 ♕b6 14.♗e3 ♕c7 15.f4 ♘ed7 16.♕d2 ♖e8 17.♗f2 ♘b6 18.♖ad1 ♗e6 Cori Tello – Almeida Quintana, Malaga 2008. Here White could get a serious edge by concrete means: 19.♕xd6!N ♕xd6 20.♖xd6 ♗f8 (Black cannot play 20...♗xc4 in view of 21.♗xb6 ♗xf1 22.♗d4+–, while 20...♘xc4? loses at once to 21.♖xe6!+–) 21.c5 ♗xd6 22.cxd6 with more than enough compensation for the exchange.

13.♘c2 ♕b6

This position has been reached in a couple of games, but for some reason no-one has played the obvious:



14.♕xd6!N

I was unable to find a way for Black to justify the pawn sacrifice, for instance:

14...♘c5

Another line is 14...♘h5 15.g4! ♗e5 16.♕d1 ♘f4 17.♕f3! ♘e6 18.♖b1 and Black hardly has sufficient compensation.

15.♕f4 a5 16.♖b1 ♘h5 17.♕f3 ♗xc3

Regaining the pawn, but exchanging this mighty bishop for a knight is a concession in itself.

18.♕xc3 ♘xe4 19.♕e3

White's powerful dark-squared bishop guarantees his advantage, regardless of whether or not the queens remain on the board.

F321) 10...♖e8 11.d5

On this occasion blocking the centre is the clear first choice, as after 11.♗e3 ♕b4! 12.♕b3 a5 Black has a good game.

11...cxd5

Black must try to play actively if he is to justify the position of his queen.

11...c5?! would make no sense, as the queen is not only misplaced but will also be forced to waste additional time after b2-b4. Here is a good illustrative example: 12.♖b1 a6 13.a3 ♕c7 14.♗f1 ♘f8 Black has a solid position, but suffers from a lack of space and virtually no prospects of counterplay. 15.b4 b6 16.♗e3 ♗d7 17.a4 It was also possible to double rooks on the b-file before playing this move. 17...♖eb8 18.♘d2 ♕c8 19.♔h2 ♘e8 20.♕c2 ♗f6 21.♖b3 a5 22.bxc5 bxc5 23.♘b5 White was much better in Kelecevic – Baljon, Eerbeek 1978.



12.cxd5 b5

Too slow is 12...a6?! 13.♗e3 ♘c5 (If 13...b5 14.♘d2 White saves a tempo by omitting a2-a3; compare the main line below.) 14.♘d2 ♕c7 15.♗f1 b6 16.♖c1 ♕b8 17.b4 ♘cd7 18.♘c4± Portisch – Freyre, Thessaloniki 1984.

13.a3

It is essential to take measures against ...b5-b4.

13...a6

The alternative is 13...b4 14.♘a4 bxa3 15.♖xa3 ♖b8, as played in the game Hjartarson – Vasiukov, Moscow 1987. Now White should have played:



16.♕c2!N when I analysed the following line: 16...♘b6 17.♘c3 ♕c5 18.♗e3 ♕c7 19.♗f1 ♗d7 20.♖c1 and White keeps serious pressure on the queenside.

14.♗e3 ♕d8 15.♘d2

Black managed to grab some space on the queenside, but on the other hand White has now clear ideas to exploit the newly created weaknesses there. This might be achieved by means of a timely a4 advance, or by manoeuvring a knight towards the c6-square with ♘b3-a5 or ♘a2-b4.



15...♘b6

This looks more challenging than:

15...♗b7

It is already a bad sign for Black if he feels compelled to develop this piece on such an unfortunate square.

16.b4 ♖c8 17.♕b3 ♘h5 18.a4 bxa4 19.♘xa4 f5?!

Grabarczyk – Bastian, Germany 2006. Now White overlooked a nice tactical solution:

20.exf5N gxf5 21.♘c5! ♘xc5

21...dxc5 loses to: 22.d6† c4 23.♘xc4 ♗xg2 24.♘xe5†+–

22.bxc5 f4 23.♕xb7 fxe3 24.♖xe3 ♗h6

After 24...♖xc5 25.♘e4 ♖b5 26.♕xa6 White has a healthy extra pawn and a winning position.

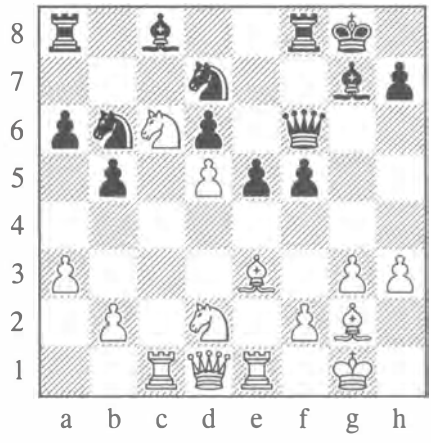
25.♘e4 ♗xe3 26.fxe3 dxc5 27.♖f1 ♖f8 28.d6+–

16.♖c1 ♖f8 17.♘a2!

In this position the plan of invading on c6 works well.

17...♘fd7 18.♘b4 f5 19.♘c6 ♕f6 20.exf5 gxf5

We have been following the game Ivkov – Minic, Vinkovci 1968. Black managed to carry out the thematic ...f7-f5, but we will see that this is far from a complete solution to his problems.



21.g4!N

This resolute move leaves White's advantage in no doubt. He will soon conquer the crucial e4-square, leaving Black with considerable problems to solve.

F322) 10...exd4 11.♘xd4



11...♘e5

As usual in such positions, Black has tried a variety of alternatives.

11...♘c5 been a rare guest in tournament practice, so it is not surprising that so far no-one has tried: 12.♗f4!N ♖d8 13.♘b3! ♘xb3 14.axb3 ♕c7 15.♕d3 and White enjoys a pleasant space advantage.

11...♖e8 12.♗e3 ♕b4?!

This is an independent option, but it is tactically flawed.

12...♘e5 13.♗f1 reaches our main line (11...♘e5 12.♗f1 ♖e8 13.♗e3), and 12...♘b6?! 13.c5! was examined in the note to Black's 9th move on page 449 (9...♖e8 10.♗e3 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘bd7 12.♖e1 ♘b6?! 13.c5!).

12...♘c5? is not a realistic option in view of 13.♘b3! ♘xb3 14.axb3 ♕c7 15.♗xa7! with an extra pawn.

13.a3!

This effectively refutes Black's last move.

13...♕a5

The pawns are untouchable: 13...♕xb2?? 14.♘a4 and 13...♕xc4?? 14.♗f1 both lose the queen.

14.b4 ♕c7 15.♖c1

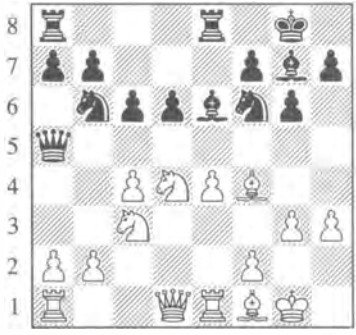
White is much better, Vladimirov – Savon, Baku 1961.

11...♘b6 12.♗f1 ♖e8 13.♗f4

This is more ambitious than the modest 13.♖b1!?, which is still a reasonable alternative.

13...♗e6

The idea to exchange queens by 13...♕h5 is not really working after 14.g4!, as 14...♘xg4?! 15.hxg4 ♗xg4 16.♕d3 can hardly promise Black sufficient compensation.



14.♘b3!N

This is an obvious improvement over 14.e5 dxe5 15.♖xe5 ♕b4 16.♘xe6 fxe6 when Black's activity fully compensates his pawn weaknesses, A. Schneider – Serrer, Budapest 1987.

14...♕h5 15.g4 ♘xg4

Also 15...♕h4 16.♘a5! d5 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.♕d2! does not bring Black any relief.

16.hxg4 ♗xg4 17.♕d3 g5

17...♗e5 18.♗xe5 ♖xe5 19.f4±

This position was reached in Kaczorowski – Braun, e-mail 2004. Now after:

18.♗g3N

Black does not have enough for the sacrificed piece.

11...♕c5 12.b3 ♘d5

For me it is absolutely clear that such a tactical idea cannot work well for Black.

13.exd5

This simple reaction is the best.

13...♕xd4



14.♗d2!!N

A strong novelty. It is certainly not a big pleasure for Black to defend the endgame that arose after 14.♗b2 ♕xd1 15.♖axd1 c5, Jasnikowski – Foygel, Moscow 1991, but the text is even stronger.

14...cxd5

If 14...♘e5 15.♖c1! It is not easy to find a reasonable move for Black, for instance: 15..♗f5 16.g4 ♗d7 17.♘e2 ♕b6 18.♗e3 ♕c7 19.f4±

15.♘xd5!!

15.♗xd5± is enough for a pleasant advantage, but the text is the main idea behind the previous move.

15...♕xa1 16.♕xa1 ♗xa1 17.♖xa1

Despite being the exchange down White's initiative is extremely dangerous.

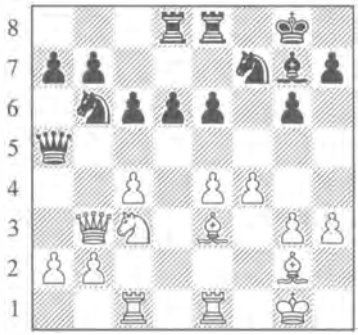
12.♗f1



12...♖e8

Needless to say Black has other moves as well.

12...♗e6 13.♘xe6 fxe6 Black gets a flexible pawn structure, but the absence of a light-squared bishop is significant. 14.♗e3 ♖ad8 15.f4 ♘f7 16.♗g2 ♘d7 17.♖c1 ♘b6 (If 17...♕b4 18.♕e2 ♘b6 19.♘d1± White comfortably defends all his pawns and is ready to transfer his knight to f2.) 18.♕b3 ♖fe8



This was Bradford – Bonin, USA 2007. Now after 19.♖c2N± White keeps everything under control and is ready to double rooks on d-file with ♖d1 and ♖cd2.

12...♕b6

Black tries to create concrete problems, but White remains on top with careful play.

13.♗e3! c5

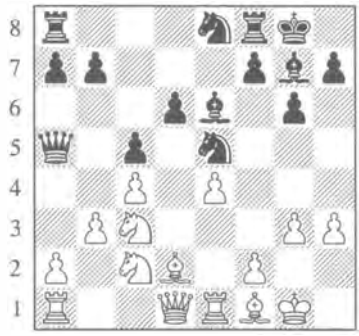
Taking the b-pawn is practically suicidal: 13...♕xb2? 14.♘a4 ♕xa1 (Relatively best, as 14...♕a3 15.♗c1 ♕b4 16.♗d2 ♕a3 17.♖e3 traps the queen anyway.) 15.♕xa1 c5 16.f4 ♘fg4 17.hxg4 ♘xg4 18.e5 and White is winning, Nunez – Almeida Quintana, Havana 1999.

14.♘c2 ♗e6 15.b3 ♕a5 16.♗d2

Black is lacking active ideas and will soon have to start worrying about defending the d6-pawn, while White can slowly look to activate his pieces.

16...♘e8

Chiburdanidze – Kovalevskaya, Hyderabad 2002. Now I improved White's play:



17.♘e3!N ♕d8

Or 17...♘f3† 18.♕xf3 ♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♕xc3 20.♖ad1±

18.♘ed5 ♕d7 19.♘f4 ♘c7 20.♖c1

We reached a complex position, but the weakness of the d6-pawn and full control over the d5-square are long-term factors that define White's advantage.

13.♗e3

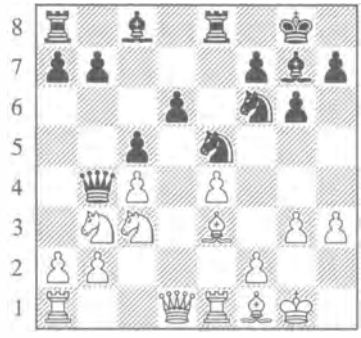
White top choice according to theory. 13.♖b1 is another decent move.

13...♗e6

Here Black has an important alternative: 13...c5 14.♘b3

The main idea of Black's 13th move is that White cannot play 14.♘db5? due to the nice tactical blow 14...♘xe4! 15.♘xe4 ♕xe1.

14...♕b4



15.a3!N

The fruit of my homework. Strangely enough I failed to discover any advantage for White after other moves, for instance 15.♕xd6 ♘f3† 16.♔h1 ♘xe1 17.♗xc5 ♕xc3! 18.bxc3 ♘xe4 and Black seems to be fine in this crazy position.

15...♕b6

After 15...♘f3† 16.♕xf3 ♕xb3 17.♖ad1 ♖e6 (clearly inferior is 17...♕xb2?! 18.♘b5!) 18.♗f4 ♘e8 19.♖d2 White has an obvious positional edge.

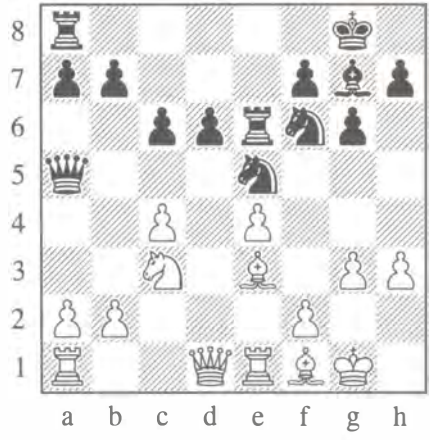
16.♘d2 ♗e6

Again the b2-pawn is untouchable: 16...♕xb2?? 17.♘a4+–

17.b4 ♕d8 18.♖b1 b6 19.b5!±

Establishing control over the c6-square and intending to drive Black's knight away from the centre with f4. White is definitely better.

14.♘xe6 ♖xe6



15.♔g2!

White has to take control over the f3-square, in order to defend against the tactical idea of 15...♘xe4! 16.♘xe4 ♕xe1! 17.♕xe1 ♘f3†.

15...♖ae8

The most natural move, although a few others have also been tried:

15...a6 16.c5!?

This is an important thematic sacrifice in this line. In return for the pawn White gets a chance to mobilize his central pawns with f4 and e5, freeing the e4-square for the knight.

16...dxc5

After 16...♖d8 White obtains a pleasant position with the simple 17.cxd6 ♖exd6 18.♕a4!.

17.f4 ♕b4?

Presumably impressed with his opponent's concept, Black takes the rather drastic decision to sacrifice a piece.

He should certainly have opted for 17...♖d8 18.♕c2 ♘ed7 19.♖ad1 b5 20.♗f2! The last preparatory move before e4-e5. 20...♘e8 21.e5 White has great compensation for the pawn, but there is still a lot of play left in the position.



18.fxe5!N

In the game Marin – Grigore, Galati 2006, White opted for 18.♗f2. Although this was sufficient to maintain an advantage, I see absolutely no reason not to accept the piece.

18...♕xb2† 19.♖e2 ♕xc3 20.exf6 ♕xf6 21.♖c1

Despite the approximate material balance, White's position is almost winning.

15...♘ed7 16.f3

White is obliged to protect the e-pawn, since 16.♖b1 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♖xe4 18.♕xd6 ♘f8 is fine for Black.

16...♘h5

16...♖ae8 17.♖b1 would transpose to the main line below.

17.♕d2 ♖ae8 18.g4!

This resolute move meets the demands of the position.

18...♗xc3?

Black should have preferred the modest 18...♘hf6, after which White should continue 19.♖ab1 ♕c7 20.b4 with slightly better chances.



Now in Borisenko – Petersons, Kiev 1964. White missed the simple:

19.♕xc3!N ♕xc3 20.bxc3 ♘hf6 21.♗xa7!

White is simply a pawn up, with two potentially monstrous bishops against two knights. The weakness of his queenside structure is hardly enough to make the position a playable one for Black.

16.♖b1!?

According to the database this is only White's fourth most popular choice, but I would pay more attention to the fact that it was Ivanchuk's choice in a recent game with King's Indian specialist Teimour Radjabov.

16...♘ed7

I regard this as Black's most challenging reply, but we must also consider the aforementioned super-GM game which continued:

16...a6 17.b4 ♕c7 18.♖c1

White is not yet ready for 18.c5 d5! and Black was okay in Vaganian – Smejkal, Germany 1997.

18...♕b8 19.c5

Now that Black is lacking the ...♕c6 resource, the ...d5 response does not work.

19...♖d8

This was Ivanchuk – Radjabov, Nice 2009. In this position I found a small improvement for White:



20.♕b3!N

White seems to be better after this logical move.

20...dxc5

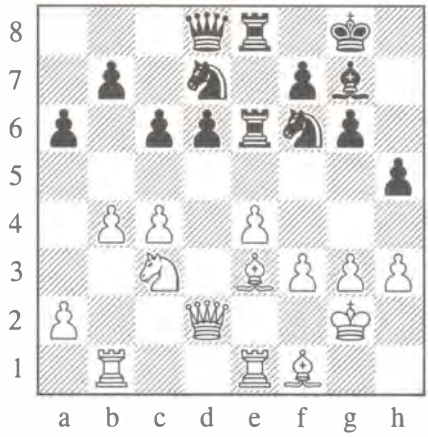
Or 20...d5 21.exd5 ♘xd5 22.♘xd5 cxd5 (Black's problem is that the otherwise desirable 22...♖xd5 runs into 23.f4! followed by 24.♗c4) 23.♖cd1±.

21.bxc5 ♘d3 22.♗xd3 ♖xd3 23.♖cd1 ♖d7 24.♗f4 ♕e8 25.f3 ♘h5 26.♗e3±

It is clear that White's pawn majority is much more potent that Black's.

17.f3 a6 18.b4 ♕d8 19.♕d2 h5!?

This position was reached in Cvitan – Volokitin, Celje 2004. Black is searching for counterplay on the kingside. He intends to search for activity on the dark squares by means of 20...h4 21.g4 ♘h7 etc. I believe this is the right moment to start concrete action in the centre, hence the following important improvement:



20.c5!N

The game saw 20.♗f2 h4 21.g4 ♘h7 22.♘e2 ♗h6! 23.♕xh6 g5 24.♕h5 ♘df6 25.♕h6 ♘d7 and a draw was agreed.

20...♕e7

Black fails to prove his compensation after 20...h4 21.♗c4! hxg3 22.♗xe6 ♖xe6 23.♖bd1± when the g3-pawn does a nice job of defending White's king!

21.cxd6 ♖xd6 22.♕c2 b5

Worse is 22...h4?! 23.e5! ♘xe5 24.f4 ♘ed7 25.♗c5 ♕f8 26.♗xd6 ♕xd6 27.♖xe8† ♘xe8 28.♘e4 ♕e7 29.♖e1 hxg3 30.♕d2! ♘f8 31.♗c4 with a clear advantage.

23.e5!

A very concrete and strong approach. In case of the slow 23.a3 Black is in time to regroup successfully: 23...h4 24.g4 ♘h7 25.♖ed1 ♘hf8 26.♘e2 ♘e6 27.f4 c5! with balanced play.

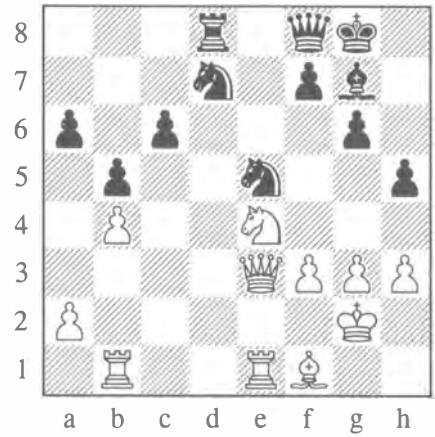
23...♘xe5 24.♗c5!

White must be accurate. The tempting 24.f4 does not work after 24...♘c4 25.♗xc4 ♕d7!! and White cannot retreat with his bishop in view of 26...♖xe3 threatening ...♖d2†.

24...♖ed8 25.♕e2 ♘fd7 26.♗xd6 ♕xd6 27.♘e4

27.♕e3!? is another decent option.

27...♕f8 28.♕e3±



Black has a degree of compensation, but I doubt that it is really enough.

Conclusion:

6...c6 is an extremely flexible move, and we have seen over the course of the chapter that it might give rise to a whole host of different pawn structures and position types. After the standard reaction of 7.0–0 White's most promising course of action will usually involve taking control over the centre with e2-e4, followed by an appropriate reaction to whichever set-up Black has adopted. In general, White's harmonious development and extra central space should provide good chances for an opening advantage, although precision will be required in certain critical variations.

Chapter 28

King's Indian



6...♘bd7

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7

7.0–0 e5 8.e4

A) 8...a6 462
B) 8...h6 466
C) 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 467
C1) 9...c6 468
C2) 9...♖e8 10.h3 469
C21) 10...a6 470
C22) 10...♘c5 11.♖e1 475
C221) 11...c6 475
C222) 11...a5 477
C223) 11...♗d7 12.♔h2!? 479
C2231) 12...h6 480
C2232) 12...a6 482
D) 8...c6 9.h3 483
D1) 9...a6 484
D2) 9...♖e8 485

A) after 14...♗f8



15.e5N

C21) note to 12...c5



18.♘c2!N

D2) note to 13...♕e7



17.♘db5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5

This is the overwhelmingly most popular choice, but there are also a few rare lines to consider.

7...♖e8 8.e4 hardly leaves Black with anything better than 8...e5, when 9.h3 will lead to one of the main lines.

7...c6 8.e4

Now Black must already begin to worry about 9.e5.

8...♕c7

Obviously the most common move is 8...e5 reaching line D.

8...♕a5 9.♖b1! looks like a promising way to exploit the early queen sortie. (White could also have played 9. ♖e1 which almost forces 9...e5, thus transposing to Line F32 of Chapter 27.) 9...e5 10.d5 c5 11.a3 White intends to follow with 12.b4 and it is obvious that Black's queen is misplaced on a5, Roiz – Godes, Tel Aviv 1997.

9.h3 e5 10.♗e3 ♖e8 11.d5

White is also better after other moves, but the text clearly underlines the poor placement of Black's queen, as well as the e8-rook.

11...c5

Obviously after 11...cxd5 12.cxd5 Black's queen would soon be forced to waste time moving again.

12.♘e1 a6 13.a4 b6 14.♘d3 ♖b8 15.♕d2 ♘h5 16.♗f3 ♘hf6 17.g4 ♔h8 18.♗g2 ♘f8 19.b4

White was clearly better in Kasparov – Capitelli, Asiago 1991.

7...c5

I do not rate the combination of ...♘bd7 and ...c5 very highly.

8.d5 ♘b6

Another plan is 8...a6 9.a4 ♘e8, but it also hardly sufficient for equality. 10.a5 b6 11.axb6 ♘xb6 12.♘d2 ♘f6 Rustemov – Kramnik, Internet (blitz) 1999. Now White should have played 13.b3N. It is understandable that he wished to avoid the temporary weakening of the long diagonal, especially in a blitz game, but in reality Black is unable to exploit it due to the exposed position of his rook on a8. 13...♖b8 (13...♘fxd5? loses material after 14.♘xd5 ♗xa1 15.♘xb6) 14.♗b2 e6 15.♕c2 exd5 16.cxd5 and White has a favourable version of a Benoni position.

9.♘d2 e6

Otherwise Black's set-up would be senseless.

10.h3 exd5 11.cxd5

Again we have reached a Benoni-type position, this time with Black's knight on b6. It is obvious that it is misplaced here and only stops Black's activity on the queenside.

11...♘fd7 12.f4!

Not allowing ...♘e5 followed by ...♘bc4.

12...f5 13.a4

As usual, it is essential to obtain the c4-square for White's knight.

13...♘f6 14.a5 ♘bd7 15.♘c4 ♘e8 16.e4 fxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘df6 18.♘g5±

White was much better in Timman – Mueller, Zurich 1988.

7...a6 8.e4 c5

8...e5 reaches line A below.

Obviously inferior is 8...♖b8?! 9.e5! ♘e8 10.♗f4 and Black has a passive position. The "active" 10...c5?! only made things worse after 11.dxc5 ♘xc5 12.exd6 ♘xd6 13.♘d5! with serious pressure, Ionescu – Nanu, Bucharest 1998.

9.e5

The most challenging continuation.

9...♘e8

Only a few games reached this position, and I was not particularly impressed with White's play in any of them. That is why I propose a new move:



10.♗e3!?N

Here is my brief analysis:

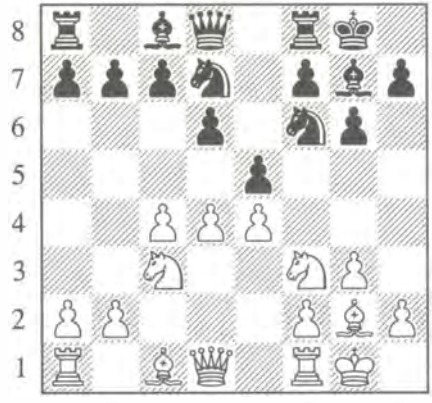
10...cxd4 11.♗xd4 dxe5 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5

Another line is 12...♘ef6 13.♗f4 ♖e8 14.♖e1 ♕a5 15.♘e5 and White's pressure is annoying.

13.♘xe5 ♘ef6 14.♘d3±

White maintains better chances, thanks to his strong light-squared bishop.

8.e4



This is the real starting point for the whole variation. We will examine four moves in detail: **A) 8...a6**, **B) 8...h6**, **C) 8...exd4** and **D) 8...c6** (excluding 9...♕b6).

The big main line with 8...c6 9.h3 ♕b6 is considered in the next chapter.

Moves like 8...♖e8 and 8...a5 do not have any real independent value, as after 9.h3 intending ♗e3 Black will usually exchange on d4 within a move or two.

A) 8...a6 9.♕c2!?

This is just about the only time we will be employing a set-up involving a quick ♖d1. In this particular situation it works very well for White, especially taking into account that other lines can quickly become very double-edged, for instance 9.♖e1 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘g4!?, or 9.h3 b5!?.

9...exd4

One of the key points of 9.♕c2 is that White is ideally placed for:

9...b5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♖d1!

Black has no time for ...c6 since his e5-pawn is hanging. Therefore he is obliged to play:

11...b4

But this is an obvious positional concession.

12.♘d5 ♖b8

I found five examples of this position on my database. Several moves have been tried, but to tell the truth I do not understand why nobody seems to have tried the natural:

13.♗e3N

Black is under pressure, for example:

13...c6 14.♘xf6† ♗xf6 15.♖d2 ♕c7 16.c5±

The main alternative is 9...c6 10.♖d1:



White is already threatening to capture on e5, so we will examine the following three moves.

a) 10...♕c7 11.h3 b5 12.c5!

This is a thematic reaction after Black advances his b-pawn.

12...dxc5 13.dxe5 ♘e8

Clearly inferior is 13...♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♕xe5 15.♗f4 ♕e6 (15...♕e8 16.♗d6±) 16.♖d6 ♕e7 17.♖xc6 ♗d7 18.♗d6 ♕e6 19.♖b6 intending 20.e5 with a big advantage, Danet – Le Du, Besancon 1999.

14.a4 ♖b8 15.axb5 axb5 16.♗e3 h6

Montalban – Defez Gomez, Mislata 1995. Here I suggest:

17.♘e2N c4 18.e6! fxe6 19.♘f4

White has a serious initiative.

b) 10...♕e7 11.h3 b5

Perhaps it was objectively better to play more modestly with something like 11...h6 12.♗e3 exd4 13.♘xd4 ♖e8, but obviously Black's set-up does not make a healthy impression, especially with his queen misplaced on e7. 14.♖e1 White can afford to lose a tempo. 14...♖b8 This was Ingbrandt – Hillarp Persson, Orebro 2000. At this point I like the positional 15.a4±, completely preventing all Black's possible ideas involving ...c5 followed by ...b5.

12.c5!

Again this typical idea works well.

12...dxc5 13.dxe5 ♘e8

13...♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♕xe5 15.♗f4 was examined in the 10...♕c7 line above.

14.♗g5 ♕e6 15.♘e2! ♘xe5 16.♕xc5 f6

This blocks the dark-squared bishop, but White was threatening to win the exchange with ♗e7.

17.♗e3

White has an obvious positional advantage.

c) 10...♖e8 11.h3

Now 11...b5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♗e3 ♕e7 will be examined in line D1, but Black can deviate from this transposition with the strange looking move:

11...♗f8 12.♗e3 b5

This occurred in Goldin – Bronstein, Polanica Zdroj 1988. Now White should once again react in the typical way:



13.c5!N

Now I analysed the following line.

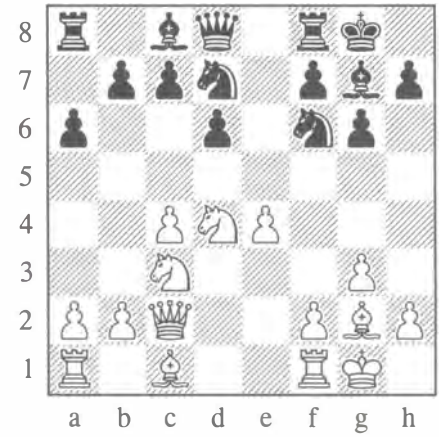
13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘xc5

Or 14...♗b7 15.♘b3 ♕c7 16.cxd6 ♗xd6 17.♖ac1 with a pleasant position for White.

15.♘xc6 ♕c7 16.♘b4 ♗b7 17.♘bd5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♗xd5 19.♖xd5

White's positional advantage is beyond any doubts.

10.♘xd4



10...♖e8

An important alternative is:

10...♘e5 11.b3 ♗d7

There is also 11...c5 12.♘de2 ♖b8 Here it is essential to prevent Black's counterplay connected with the ...b5 advance, so: 13.a4! ♗g4 (If 13...♖e8 14.h3 b6 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗e3 Black ends up in a passive position, for instance 16...h5 17.♖ad1 ♕c7 Epishin – J. Polgar, Madrid 1995, and now 18.f4N ♘c6 19.♕d3 ♘a5 [19...♗f8 20.f5↑] 20.♘c1 ♗b7 21.f5 would secure White's edge.) 14.f3 ♗d7 15.♖d1 ♘e8 This was Illescas Cordoba – Piket, Linares 1995. Here I suggest the natural 16.♗b2N (in the game White rushed with 16.f4) 16...♘c6 (too risky is 16...f5 17.f4 ♘g4 18.♖d3!) 17.♘d5 with a pleasant edge for White.



12.♗b2!N

Strangely enough nobody seems to have played this natural move.

12...c5

I also examined 12...♖e8 13.♖ad1 ♕b8, after which 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♘xc6 ♗xc6 16.♘d5± gives White a stable edge.

13.♘de2 b5 14.f4!

A logical reaction. Now White obtains the advantage by concrete measures.

14...♘eg4

After 14...♘c6 15.♖ad1 Black has problems defending the d6-pawn.

15.♕d3

White comfortably covers the e3-square.

15...bxc4 16.bxc4 ♖b8 17.♖ab1±

White is firmly in control. He has prevented all possible counterplay, and now threatens to drive Black's knight to the edge of the board by means of 18.h3.

11.♖d1 ♖b8

Black continues preparing his queenside counterplay.

11...♘e5

This meets with a powerful retort.

12.c5! ♗g4

12...dxc5 13.♘f5 ♕xd1† 14.♘xd1 gxf5 15.exf5± leaves Black without reasonable compensation.

12...♗d7 13.f4 just transposes to 12...♗g4, with one fewer move having been played.

13.f3 ♗d7 14.f4!

This is much stronger than 14.♘b3 ♕e7 with double-edged play, Strikovic – Tissir, Lorca 2006.

14...♘c4

Clearly worse is 14...♘c6 15.♘xc6 ♗xc6 16.e5! ♘g4 17.h3 with a big advantage.



15.b3!N

This is a serious improvement over 15.c6 bxc6 16.e5 ♘g4 with a very complex game, Ullrich – Beckemeier, Germany 1985.

15...♘a5

If 15...dxc5 16.♘de2 Black will be hard pressed to meet the intended 17.e5.

16.♗a3

Also interesting is 16.♗b2 ♘g4 17.♕e2 dxc5 18.♘c2 with very interesting compensation, for instance: 18...♕c8 19.e5 ♖b8 20.♘e4 b6 21.h3 ♘h6 22.g4⩲ White has a powerful initiative for the pawn.

16...dxc5

16...♘g4 17.♕c1 does not help Black.

17.♗xc5 b6 18.♗a3 c5 19.♘f3

White's chances are clearly preferable.

12.h3

This is invariably a useful move in this variation, preparing to place the bishop on e3.



12...c5

Black has also tried 12...♕e7 13.♗g5 ♕f8, but this seems a bit too passive. White continues with 14.a4 Preventing all hopes of counterplay with ...b5. 14...♗h6 15.♕d2 (15.f4!? was also worthy of consideration.) 15...♗xg5 16.♕xg5 ♕g7 17.♔h2 ♘c5 18.♕e3 and White was clearly better in Ivanchuk – Narciso Dublan, Barcelona 2006.

13.♘f3!

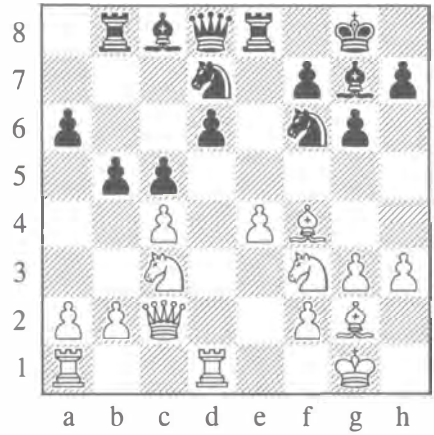
Less clear is 13.♘de2 ♘e5 14.b3 b5 15.f4 ♘ed7.

13...b5

Black got into an unpleasant position after 13...♕e7 14.♗f4 ♘e5 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.♗e3 b6 17.a3 ♗b7 18.♖ab1 ♖ed8 19.♖xd8† ♕xd8 20.b4 in Studeny – Pachow, Germany 2003.

14.♗f4!

The complications resulting from 14.♖xd6 b4 are far from clear.



14...♗f8

At first glance this looks like an admission of failure, but White must still play accurately to contain his opponent's initiative.

While I was preparing the present chapter, I also decided to analyse a principled move that had not yet been tested:

14...b4

By a curious quirk of fate, the very same move was most unexpectedly played against me before the book was published!

15.♗xd6 bxc3 16.♗xb8

It seems to me that Black fails to get sufficient compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

16...♕b6

16...cxb2 runs into: 17.♖ab1 ♘xe4 18.♗e5!± and the b2-pawn is falling.

17.♗f4 ♕xb2

At the time of the game the only continuation I had analysed was 17...cxb2 18.♖ab1 ♘xe4, when White has the strong 19.♖e1 f5 20.♘g5! with a clear advantage.

We have been following the game Avrukh

– Rudolf, Ohrid 2009. In the game I immediately went wrong and allowed my opponent to obtain genuine compensation. However, with accurate play White should be able to maintain control. The correct response is:

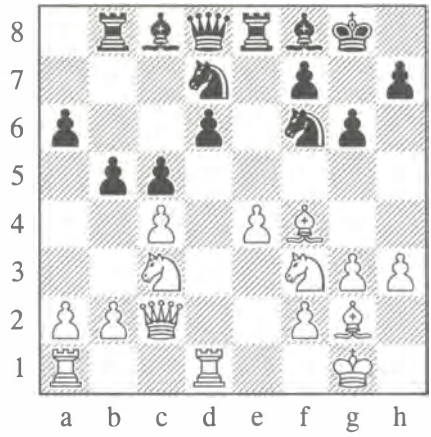
18.♘e1!

The point is seen in the following forcing line:

18...♕xc2 19.♘xc2 ♘xe4 20.♖e1! f5 21.f3 ♘ef6 22.♖xe8† ♘xe8 23.♖b1

White should win the ending.

Now I propose a simple move:



15.e5N

The only game saw 15.cxb5 axb5 16.a4 Pezzica – Fritz, e-mail 2002. Now Black missed the strong idea 16...♗b7!N with unclear play.

However, White does have a second promising idea in the exchange sacrifice 15.♖xd6!?N ♗xd6 16.♗xd6 ♖b6 17.♗f4 (Unfortunately after the natural 17.e5 Black has a strong defensive idea at his disposal: 17...♗b7 18.♖d1 ♕a8! When he is by no means worse.) 17...♗b7 18.♘d2 White has nice compensation. He intends to play ♘d5 at a suitable moment and to recapture with the c-pawn in the event of an exchange.

15...b4

Others would lead to serious problems for Black. Now the game follows a forcing sequence.

16.♘a4 ♘h5 17.♗g5 f6

Black faces serious problems after: 17...♕c7 18.exd6 ♗xd6 19.♕d2! ♗e7 (or 19...♗f8 20.g4!) 20.♖e1 ♘b6 21.♘xc5!±

18.exf6 ♘hxf6

Now I analysed the following continuation:

19.a3 a5 20.axb4 axb4 21.♗f4 ♕c7 22.♕d3±

White keeps definite pressure.

B) 8...h6

This used to be quite a popular move, especially in the late 1980s. Black's idea is to prepare the manoeuvre ...♘f6-h7-g5, with the idea to exchange a pair of knights and perhaps generate some pressure against the white kingside.

9.h3 ♘h7



White has several routes to a slight plus, but I choose to recommend the following.

10.♗e3 ♘g5 11.♘xg5 hxg5 12.♖c1

I like this positional move quite a lot.

12...exd4

The "waiting" strategy is hardly a good idea for Black: 12...c6 13.d5 c5 14.♘b5! ♕e7 15.♕d2 f6 16.b4 b6 17.a3 and White has much better chances, Lingnau – Schoenberger, Muenster 1997.

13.♗xd4 ♘e5



14.b3!

White should not rush with 14.c5, as the position after 14...g4 15.hxg4 ♗xg4 16.f3 ♗e6 appears rather unclear, Litinskaya – Botsari, Debrecen 1992.

14...c5

Black cannot play passively with 14...♗e6? as after 15.f4 gxf4 16.gxf4 ♘c6 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.f5 White develops a dangerous initiative, McFarland – Greet, Hove 1997.

15.♗e3 g4

Sooner or later Black should play this.

16.hxg4 ♗xg4

Black has also tried 16...♘xg4 17.♗f4 ♕a5 Santl – Bobzin, corr. 1998. Now White should have played 18.♕c2N ♘e5 19.♘b5! ♖d8 20.♖cd1 ♕b6 21.♗g5! f6 22.♗c1 with a serious positional advantage.

17.f3 ♗e6 18.♘e2 ♕e7 19.♕d2

White has a slight positional edge thanks to Black's permanently weak d6-pawn, Borovikov – Matjushin, Kharkov 2000.

C) 8...exd4

White was not really threatening d5 or dxe5 yet, so without wanting to split hairs, one could make the argument that this reveals Black's intentions just a little too quickly.

9.♘xd4



Now we will examine two moves in detail: **C1) 9...c6** and **C2) 9...♖e8**.

9...a6 10.♕c2 reaches line A.

9...♘c5 10.h3 ♖e8 11.♖e1 is line C22.

9...♘e5 10.b3 ♗d7

10...c5 11.♘de2 ♘e8 is not a serious option. White has got an advantage without much effort after 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.♕d2 ♕d7 14.♖ad1± Ditt – Striebich, Menden 1974.

There is also not much point in 10...♗g4 11.f3 ♗d7 when White can simply develop his pieces. 12.♗b2 ♘c6 Cross – Pafnutieff, Hollywood 1952, and now 13.♖c1 ♖e8 14.♘d5 would give White pleasant edge.

11.♗b2

11.h3 ♖e8 12.♗e3 is another good option.

11...♖e8 12.♖e1

Black is unable to create counterplay. Here is one example:

12...h6 13.f4 ♘c6 14.♘d5 ♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♗g4 16.♕d2 ♘xd4 17.♗xd4 ♕d7 18.♖ac1±

White has a clear positional advantage, Wassin – Vlach, Heraklio 2008.

C1) 9...c6



10.h3 ♖e8 11.♗e3

11.♖e1 is not needed yet, and after 11...a5 12.♗e3 a4 Black has reasonable counterplay.

11...a5

11...♘c5 reaches line D2.

12.♕c2 a4!?

Black uses a tactical motif in order to obtain the a5-square for his queen. 12...♘c5 again leads to line D2.

13.♖ad1

In my opinion White should not enter the complications arising after 13.♘xa4 ♘xe4! 14.♗xe4 ♖xa4 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♕xa4 ♘e5 and Black has very interesting compensation for the exchange.

13...♕a5 14.♖fe1

White continues to strengthen his position.

14...♘c5

Black also tried the rather provocative:

14...♕b4 15.a3

Positionally this is not the most desirable move, but I think it is worth making a small concession in order to gain time.

Nevertheless White can also consider 15.♘b1!? intending to meet 15...♘b6 or 16...♘e5 with 16.♘a3, maintaining control without compromising the pawn structure.

15...♕a5

Black cannot take on c4 as the queen would be in trouble after the simple bishop retreat to f1.

16.f4

Obviously this is much better than 16.b4?! axb3 17.♘xb3 ♕c7 when Black will always have plenty of counterplay against White's weak pawns on the queenside, Bunzmann – Enders, Germany 1998.

I originally analysed the text move as a novelty, but then saw that it had been played towards the end of 2009.

16...♘b6

Not much is changed by 16...♘c5 17.♗f2 ♘fd7 18.♘a2 (18.♘f3 ♘b6 19.♗f1 ♗e6 20.♖xd6 ♗xc4 leads to unclear play) 18...♕c7 19.♘b4 White keeps the better chances, thanks to his spatial superiority.

17.♗f1 ♘fd7

This position was reached in Buss – Pavlovic, Ohrid 2009. Now I suggest:

18.♕f2!N

This is directed against the knight's intended move to c5. The point is revealed after:

18...♘c5

Perhaps Black should try something else, but in that case it is clear that his strategy has failed.

19.e5! dxe5 20.♘xc6 bxc6 21.♗xc5

White has clearly better chances, for instance: 21...♘d7 22.♗b4 ♕c7 23.♗d6 ♕a5 24.c5±

15.♗f4!

One of the key ideas in this variation is to attack Black's d6-pawn, and here the timing is perfect.

15...♗f8

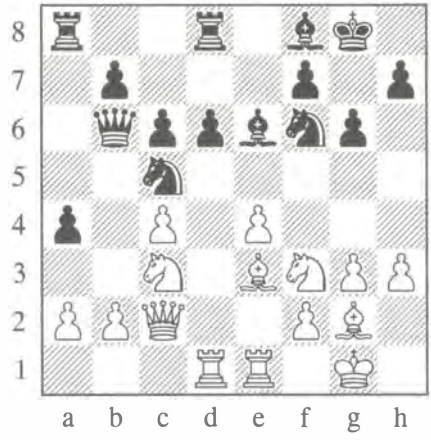
Sacrificing the pawn does not work. After 15...♘e6 16.♗xd6 ♘xd4 17.♖xd4 ♘d5 White has the simple 18.e5! ♗f5 19.♕d2 ♘xc3 20.♕xc3 ♕xc3 21.bxc3 and she remained with an extra pawn in Manakova – Segal, Duisburg 1992.

16.♘f3 ♖d8

In case of 16...♗e6 17.♗xd6 ♗xc4 18.♗xf8 ♔xf8 Reshevsky – Najdorf, Salvador 1952, I would suggest 19.♖d4!?N ♗e6 20.♕d2, threatening 21.e5 followed by ♕h6 and ♘g5. Play might continue 20...♔g7 21.♖d1 and thanks to his control over the d-file White has clearly better chances. His main plan will be to prepare an advance of his kingside pawns.

17.♗d2 ♕b6 18.♗e3 ♗e6

We have been following the game Lekander – Hakki, Eksjo 1982. Here I like:



19.♗d4!?N ♘e8

If 19...♗g7 White gets a favourable position by means of: 20.♘xa4 (Also worthy of consideration is 20.e5!?) 20...♕b4 21.♘xc5 dxc5 22.♗c3 ♕xc4 23.b3 ♕a6 24.♘g5!±

20.♗f1±

White keeps a firm control over the position, while Black remains quite passive.

C2) 9...♖e8 10.h3



Now the two principal continuations are **C21) 10...a6** and **C22) 10...♘c5**.

Also to be considered are:

10...c6 11.♗e3 takes us back to line C1.

10...♘e5 11.b3 a6

11...♗d7 12.♗e3 a6 allows White to set up his pieces in the optimal way: 13.♕c2 c5 14.♘de2 b5 15.♖ad1 Here, having failed to equalize, Black committed the inaccuracy 15...♕e7?! in Glaser – Ludwig, Leipzig 1995. This could have been punished by 16.♗g5! when there is no comfortable defence against White's threats of 17.♘d5 and 17.f4 followed by e5, for instance: 16...♗c6 17.f4 ♘ed7 18.e5 ♗xg2 19.exf6±

12.♗e3 c5

This is premature. Relatively best would have been 12...♖b8 transposing to line C21.

13.♘de2 ♖b8 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♕d2! ♗xh3

Having reached a strategically difficult position, Black tries unsuccessfully to complicate matters.

Note that 15...b5 does not work in view of the simple 16.e5! when both Black's knights are hanging.

16.♗xh3 ♘xe4 17.♘xe4 ♗xa1 18.♖xa1 ♖xe4

We have been following the game Valiente – Cortes Moyano, Santiago de Chile 2008. Now the simplest would be:

19.♘c3N ♖e8 20.♘d5

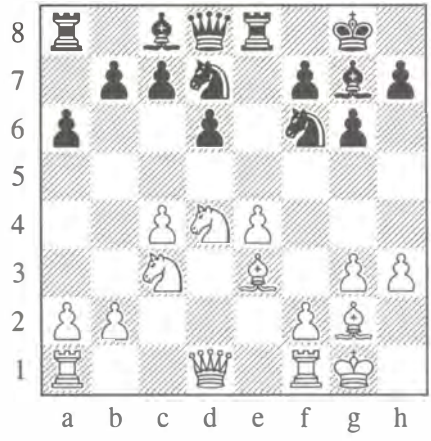
With a huge advantage.

C21) 10...a6

This set-up is sometimes referred to as the Gallagher variation, after the Anglo-Swiss GM. Gallagher has certainly been one of its most loyal adherents, and has also published analysis on it in various books. Black's main idea is to prepare the moves ...c5, ...♘e5 and ...b5, with strong counterplay on the queenside.

11.♗e3

I believe this standard developing move to be the most promising. 11.♖e1 has been the most popular choice, but it is not necessary to overprotect the e-pawn at this stage.



11...♖b8

This is an essential part of Black's strategy; he could hardly contemplate a subsequent ...b5 with his rook still on a8.

He has also occasionally switched plans with 11...♘c5 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.♖ad1 ♕c8 14.♔h2 ♖e5!? as seen in Krogius – Kuzmin, Cappelle la Grande 1995. Black's idea is quite tricky, but could have been refuted as follows:



15.b4!N ♖h5 16.bxc5 ♗xh3 17.f3! and Black's attack appears to be insufficient, for instance: 17...♗xg2† 18.♔xg2 ♕h3† 19.♔f2 ♕h2† 20.♔e1 ♕xg3† 21.♗f2 ♕g2 22.cxd6 cxd6 23.♕b3±

12.b3!

White defends the c4-pawn if anticipation of ...♘e5.

12...c5

This is the most popular move – Black simply continues with his plan. He has tried a few other approaches as well, and I suggest that you pay particularly close attention to the second and third of the following options:

12...♘c5

This does not really challenge the white position.

13.♕c2 ♗d7

13...♕e7 is met strongly by 14.♖fe1! ♘fxe4 (After 14...♗d7 15.♖ad1 White has an optimal set-up, while it is hard to say the same about Black's arrangement, Mittelman – Lederer, Beersheba 1997.) 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 ♕xe4 17.♗d2! The point. 17...♕xe1† 18.♖xe1 ♖xe1† 19.♗xe1

♗xd4 Ruck – Vajda, Gyula 2000. Now the strongest would be 20.g4!N ♗d7 21.♗c3 ♗xc3 22.♕xc3, and Black would face a tough defence, since White has good chances to generate an attack using the weakened dark squares on the kingside.

14.b4 ♘e6 15.♘b3!

It is generally favourable for White to keep more pieces on the board, since he has a definite space advantage. On a secondary note, now he can comfortably meet ...b7-b5 with c4-c5.

15...♕c8

As I mentioned above, White is ready for 15...b5 16.c5 dxc5 17.♘xc5 ♘xc5 18.♗xc5 when he maintains a pleasant positional advantage.

16.♖ad1

White was obviously better in Avrukh – Arizmendi Martinez, Biel 2003.

12...♘e5

This is a bit trickier.

13.a4!

This stops Black's idea connected with the ...b5 advance.

The point of Black's last move can be seen after 13.f4?! ♘ed7 when White is unable to prevent the two main ideas: 14...c5 followed by ...b5, and the tactical blow 14...♘c5 followed by capturing on e4, exploiting the vulnerable position of the bishop on e3.

13...♗d7

We have reached a very important moment.



14.♖a2!

The ideal way to maintain control. The rook is heading for d2, where it will be perfectly placed to restrain Black's possible counterplay.

14.♕c2 ♕c8 15.♔h2 c5! 16.♘de2 b5 gave Black nice play in Wilke – Bakhmatov, Templin 2004.

14...♕c8

Less accurate would be 14...h5?! 15.♖d2 ♕c8 In this position White has the opportunity for 16.f4! which would be impossible with the king on h2, as Black would give a check on g4. 16...♘c6 17.♔h2 (I would also seriously consider 17.f5!? ♘e5 18.♖df2 with good attacking chances, due to Black's ...h5 move, which seriously weakened his kingside.) 17...h4 Consistent, but White's forces are much better prepared for complications. 18.gxh4 ♘h5 19.♘d5 ♕d8 20.♘f5! and White obtained a big advantage in Stohl – Arizmendi Martinez, Leon 2001.

15.♔h2

Now if 15.f4 Black is just in time to create counterplay with 15...♘c6 16.♔h2 ♘b4 17.♖d2 c5 followed by ...♗c6.

15...h5

It was also important to check 15...c5 16.♘de2 b5. The critical line runs 17.axb5 (17.cxb5 axb5 18.♕xd6 c4! allows Black plenty of counterplay) 17...axb5 18.♕xd6 (once again 18.cxb5 ♗xb5 19.♘xb5 ♖xb5 20.♕xd6 c4 gives Black counter-chances) 18...bxc4 19.bxc4 ♘xc4 20.♕xc5 ♘xe3 21.♕xe3 and Black does not have enough compensation for the missing pawn.

16.♖d2!

In the game Skembris – Knaak, Athens, 1992 White defended with the less than ideal 16.f3. This does not worsen his position significantly, but I still prefer the text move.

16...h4 17.gxh4 c5!

This looks like the most challenging move. Instead 17...♘h5 18.f4 transposes to the

game Stohl – Arizmendi, examined after 14...h5?! instead of 14...♕c8 above.

It is time to improve on White's play:



18.♘c2!N

In the game White choose 18.♘de2, which allowed the nice 18...♗xh3! 19.♗xh3 ♘f3† forcing a perpetual, and after 20.♔g3 ♘h5† 21.♔g2 ♘xh4† a draw was agreed in Ki. Georgiev – Knaak, Dortmund 1991.

18...♘fg4†

This looks critical.

After 18...b5 19.axb5 axb5 White removes his vulnerable knight with tempo: 20.♘xb5! ♗xb5 21.cxb5 ♖xb5 (or 21...c4 22.♘d4! c3 23.♖c2±) 22.f4± White is much better.

I also examined 18...♘h5 19.♖xd6 ♗g4 20.hxg4 ♘xg4† 21.♔g1 ♗xc3 22.♗g5 ♗e5 23.♖d3± and thanks to the idea of ♗h3, Black is unable to maintain control over the key f4-square.

19.hxg4 ♘xg4† 20.♔g1 ♗xc3 21.♖xd6 ♘xe3

Black should eliminate the dark-squared bishop in order to fight for compensation. Instead after 21...♗e6 22.♗f4± he is just a pawn down for very little.

22.♘xe3 ♗e6

Under normal circumstances the unopposed dark-squared bishop might provide good compensation for Black's missing pawn. However, in this particular position White has a strong and concrete idea at his disposal:

23.h5 ♗e5 24.hxg6 fxg6 25.♘g4!±

12...♕e7!?

I suggest that the reader pays close attention to this move. I only found six games (almost all of which involved a grandmaster playing Black), with Black scoring three wins and three draws.



13.a4

This seems like the only good way to stop Black's intended ...c5 followed by 14...b5.

13...♘c5

Another line is 13...c5 14.♘de2 b6 Huzman – Gallagher, Mallorca 2004. Here White should choose the most natural 15.♕d2!N Evidently he was afraid of 15...♗b7, but here White has the strong 16.♗f4 ♘e5 (In case of 16...♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗xe4 18.♗xd6 ♘e5 White has 19.f4, gaining material.) 17.♖ad1 ♖bd8 18.♗g5! ♕f8 19.f4 ♘c6 20.f5 with a serious attack.

14.f3

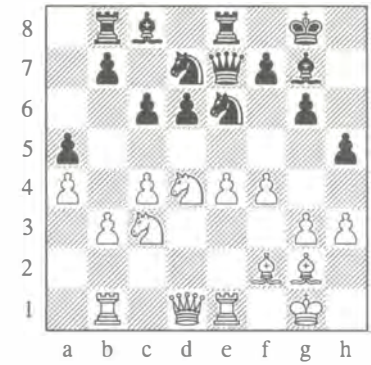
Not the most desirable move, but White will eventually prepare f4 and it should also be noted that Black's queen is slightly misplaced on e7. Here is one example:

14...a5 15.♗f2 c6 16.♖e1 h5 17.f4

Finally we reached a normal-looking position for the whole line.

17...♘fd7 18.♖b1 ♘e6

This position occurred in Borovikov – Vovk, Alushta 2008. Now White could use have exploited his opponent's weakened kingside with:



19.♘d5!N ♕d8 20.♘xe6 ♖xe6

White is also better after: 20...fxe6 21.♘e3 ♘c5 22.♕d2±

21.f5 ♖e8 22.♘f4 ♘e5 23.♕d2±

Black might start to regret the ...h7-h5 move.

13.♘de2 b5

Black follows his plan and plunges head-first into the complications. There was nothing to gain from postponing this advance, as after 13...♕c7 14.a4! he falls under positional pressure, for example 14...♘e5 15.♖a2 ♗e6 16.f4 ♘c6 17.g4! and Black was in serious trouble, P.H. Nielsen – Arizmendi Martinez, Istanbul 2003.

14.♕xd6

This implies an exchange sacrifice, but White gets excellent value for it.

14...b4 15.♘a4 ♘xe4



16.♗xe4

Obviously we would not usually wish to exchange our prized bishop for a lowly knight, but it is important to keep the momentum.

16...♗xa1

After 16...♖xe4 White has 17.♖ad1 ♕e8 18.♘f4! (There is no point in entering complications with 18.♘xc5 ♖xe3 19.♘xd7 ♖xe2 20.♘xb8 ♗xh3 with unclear play, Zebre – Yarmolyuk, corr. 2006.) 18...♗f8 (Worse is 18...♗e5 19.♕c6 when Black loses the c5-pawn, while after 19...♗d4 20.♘xc5! ♖xe3 21.♖xd4+– he ended up in a lost position in Drozdovskij – Golubev, Odessa 2007.) 19.♕c7! (Less convincing is 19.♕d3 ♘b6) 19...♖e5 This position was reached in J. Horvath – Reinderman, Haarlem 1993. Now the natural improvement would be 20.♘d5N ♖b7 21.♕a5± and Black loses the c5-pawn.

17.♖xa1 ♖xe4 18.♘xc5 ♖e8

This is the most challenging, although a couple of alternatives have been tried:

18...♖xe3 19.fxe3 ♕e8 (19...♖b6 20.♕d4 is also hopeless for Black) 20.e4! ♖b6 21.♕c7 ♖f6 22.♖d1+– J. Horvath – Berthelot, Cannes 2002.

18...♖b6 19.♕d2 ♕f6

This was Makarov – Thipsay, Moscow 2004. Now there is a clear improvement:



20.♘xe4!N ♕xa1† 21.♔g2!!

Only like this. The natural looking 21.♔h2 actually squanders all White's advantage after 21...♖e6 22.♘d6 ♘e5!.

21...♗b7

If 21...♖e6, there follows 22.♘d6! ♖xd6 23.♕xd6 ♗b7† 24.f3 ♕xa2 25.♔f2, and Black is helpless against the threats.

22.♕xd7 ♗xe4† 23.f3 ♗xf3†



24.♔f2!!

The easiest way, although 24.♔xf3 ♕f1† 25.♗f2 ♖f6† 26.♘f4 g5 27.♕d8† ♔g7 28.♔g4! seems to be winning as well, since after 28...gxf4 29.♗d4 fxg3 30.♕xf6† ♕xf6 31.♗xf6† ♔xf6 32.♔xg3 the pawn endgame should be winning for White, thanks to his c-pawn.

24...♖b8

Obviously Black cannot play 24...♗xe2? 25.♕d8† ♔g7 26.♗d4†.

25.♔xf3

White has a large advantage, for instance 25...♕f6† 26.♔g2 ♖d8 27.♗d4 ♖xd7 28.♗xf6 ♖d2 29.♔f3 ♖xa2 30.♘d4 and the c-pawn should decide the issue.

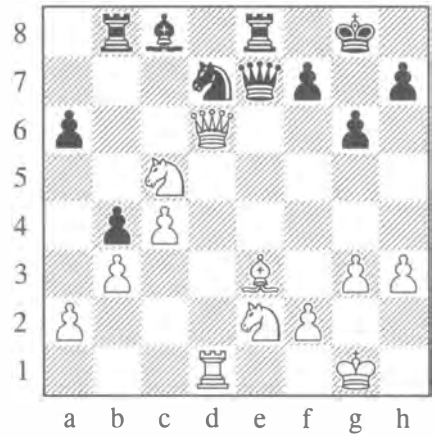
19.♖d1

This position used to be evaluated as lost for Black, but then it transpired that he can still fight with:

19...♕e7

And not 19...♕a5? when 20.♘xd7 ♗xd7 21.♕xd7 ♕xa2 22.♕d3 was winning for White in Terekhov – Raykhman, Munich 2008.

Now White faces a very important crossroads. After a deep investigation I came to the conclusion that White's best option is:



20.♕xe7

The alternative is 20.♕c7, but here I believe Black has good chances to hold after 20...♘xc5 21.♕xb8 ♕e4!.

20...♖xe7 21.♘f4

Even without queens White has a serious initiative, which more than makes up for the missing exchange.

21...♘xc5 22.♗xc5 ♖d7

I also examined 22...♖e8 23.♘d5 ♖e2 24.♗xb4 ♗e6 (24...♗b7 25.♘f6† ♔g7 26.♗c3±) 25.♗d6 ♖b7 26.♘c3 ♖c2 27.♘e4 ♖xa2 28.♗e5 f6 29.♖d8† ♔f7 30.♘d6† ♔e7 31.♗xf6†! ♔xf6 32.♘xb7 ♗xh3 33.♘c5 when the endgame should be winning for White.

23.♘d5 ♔g7 24.♗d4† f6

A sad necessity, in view of 24...♔h6 25.♘f6 ♖xd4 26.♖xd4 ♗xh3 27.g4 with a large advantage for White.

25.♗xf6† ♔f7 26.♗e5

With two pawns for the exchange, White is at least equal on material terms. Moreover, he still has fine attacking chances due to his domination in the centre and on the dark squares, Kiss – Tratar, Austria 1996.

C22) 10...♘c5 11.♖e1



Now the three most important moves are **C221) 11...c6**, **C222) 11...a5** and **C223) 11...♗d7**.

Sometimes Black tries the mysterious waiting move:

11...h6

White can try to exploit the slowness of this approach with:

12.♘b3!

Compared with line C223, Black lacks the option of 12...♘a4.

12...♘e6

Alternatives also do not promise Black an adequate game.

a) 12...♘xb3 13.axb3 White has strengthened his c4-pawn and entered his queenside rook into the play. Even more importantly, he eliminated Black's pressure against the e4-pawn and now can easily improve his position. 13...a6 14.♗e3 ♗d7 15.♕d2 h5 16.f4 ♗c6 17.♗f2 a5 18.♖ad1 ♕c8 19.♗d4 was clearly better for White in Moskalenko – Illescas Cordoba, Barcelona 2005.

b) 12...♘fd7 13.♗e3 ♘e5 (or 13...♘xb3 14.axb3 a6 15.♕c2 with a pleasant edge, Bayer – Holzke, Germany 1996) 14.♘xc5 dxc5 15.♕e2 ♗e6 16.♖ad1 ♕c8 was Drozdovskij – Ootes, Leeuwarden 2009, and now White should have opted for: 17.f4!N ♘xc4 (No better is: 17...♗xc4 18.♕c2 ♘d7 19.b3 ♗a6 A sad necessity. [19...♗e6 20.f5!+–] 20.e5± Despite being a pawn up Black's position is hard to defend.) 18.♗xc5 ♘b6 19.♔h2 and White maintains a comfortable advantage.

13.f4 a5 14.a4

Preventing any potential tricks along the h8-a1 diagonal, as might occur after 14.♗e3 a4 15.♘d4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 c5 17.♗f2 a3 18.b3 ♘g4!.

14...h5 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♕f3 c6 17.♖ad1 ♕c7 18.♕f2 b6 19.♘d4±

White has maintained control and enjoys a pleasant edge, Anastasian – Comas Fabrego, Istanbul 2000.

C221) 11...c6 12.♕c2

Another decent possibility is 12.♗f4, when the main continuation is 12...♘e6 13.♗e3 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗e6 15.♕d3 ♕a5 The position is complex, but it seems to me that White's chances are preferable. Nevertheless I like the text move even more.



12...♘fxe4?!

A risky move according to theory. The main line is obviously 12...a5 13.♗e3, which almost transposes to line D2 of the present chapter, except that White has played ♖f1-e1 instead of ♖a1-d1. This should not alter the evaluation in any dramatic way. White has managed to develop his pieces in the optimal way, with ♖ad1 to follow shortly, and thus enjoys an almost automatic advantage with his central control and well coordinated pieces.

13.♘xe4 ♗xd4 14.♗g5!

After this strong move White forces the exchange of Black's dark-squared bishop for a knight, obtaining a dangerous initiative thanks to the obvious weakness of the dark-squares in Black's camp.

14...♕d7

The bad news for Black is that 14...f6? is impossible due to 15.♗xf6!.

15.♘f6† ♗xf6 16.♗xf6 ♖e6

This defensive manoeuvre has been played in all the games that reached this position.

17.♗c3!

This is stronger than 17.♕c3.

17...♕e7

This does not solve Black's problems, but I doubt that he has anything better.

17...♕d8 18.b4 ♖xe1†

Or 18...♘d7 Vasilev – Maitesian, Cannes 2000, and now 19.♖xe6N fxe6 20.♖d1 d5 21.♕e2 with a powerful attack.

19.♖xe1 ♘e6 20.♕d2

The vulnerability of the dark-squares in not Black's only problem – he also has trouble developing his light-squared bishop.

20...♕f8

Lagowski – Chojnacki, Poznan 2006. Here I found a simple improvement:



21.♖d1!N

White regains the pawn by force, and his bishops will remain a powerful force in the endgame.

21...♗d7 22.♕xd6 ♕xd6 23.♖xd6 ♗e8 24.♗f6 a5 25.b5 cxb5 26.cxb5 ♗xb5 27.♗xb7 ♖b8 28.♗f3

The mating net around Black's king should decide the game.

18.b4 ♘d7

This position has occurred in two games, but White's play left much to be desired on both occasions. Fortunately it is easy to improve his play as follows:



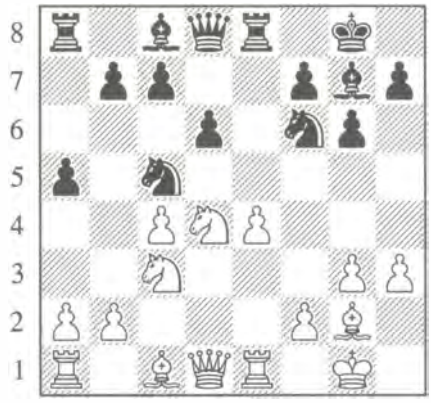
19.♖xe6!N fxe6 20.♖d1 e5 21.♕d2

21.b5 cxb5 22.cxb5 ♘c5 23.♕d2 ♗f5 is less convincing.

21...♘b6 22.♕xd6 ♕xd6 23.♖xd6 ♗f5 24.c5 ♘c4 25.♖d1±

It is doubtful that Black can hold this endgame.

C222) 11...a5



12.♘db5!

This is the most principled continuation. Needless to say, White has numerous alternatives, but I like the text move the most. Black is prevented from playing ...c6 for the time being and has to suffer White's annoying knight, which might help to facilitate many tactical ideas for us.

12...♗d7

We should also pay attention to three other moves:

12...a4 has been tried four times, but strangely enough on each occasion White missed the thematic 13.e5!N, which is extremely strong here. Here is an illustrative line: 13...dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘xc7 ♖b8 (Black loses a pawn after 15...♖a5 16.♖xe5) 16.♗e3 ♘d3 17.♖ed1 and Black is in trouble, due to the threat of 18.♗a7.

12...♘fd7 13.♗g5!

A very important tactical resource. Practice revealed 13.♗e3 ♘e5 14.♗xc5 dxc5 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.♘xc7 ♖b8 to be perfectly playable for Black.

13...♕xg5

Black has to accept the challenge, as otherwise his position is simply unpleasant.

13...♗f6 14.♗xf6 ♘xf6 15.e5! dxe5 16.♕xd8 ♖xd8 17.♘xc7 ♖b8 18.♖xe5± with a healthy extra pawn for White.

13...f6 14.♗e3± leaves Black with a blocked bishop.

14.♘xc7 ♕d8 15.♘xa8 ♗xc3!

The best chance. 15...♘e5 16.♘b5 ♘xc4 17.♘ac7 leaves Black with no compensation for the exchange.

16.bxc3.♖e6

16...♘e5!? This move, which was mentioned by Vul in *Chess Informant* 86, may be a better practical chance although White still remains on top. 17.♖b1 ♘xc4 18.♗f1 Vul stopped analysing here, evaluating the position as clearly better for White, and indeed after 18...♗e6 19.♗xc4 ♗xc4 20.♘b6 ♗xa2 21.♖b5 Black fails to demonstrate compensation.

17.♖b1 b6

17...b5 runs into strong 18.e5! dxe5 19.♖xb5 when Black can resign.

18.e5!

A key idea; now Black will hardly be able to trap the knight.

18...dxe5

18...♗b7? is much worse. Vul gives the following brilliant line: 19.♗xb7 ♘xb7 20.♘xb6 ♘xb6 21.♕d4 dxe5 (21...♘c5 22.exd6+–) 22.♕xd8† ♘xd8 23.♖ed1 ♘b7 24.♖b5!+– and Black unavoidably loses one of his knights.

We have been following the game Vul – Markosian, Moscow, 2002. Now I think White should have played:

19.♗d5!N .♖f6 20.♖e3!

Intending ♖f3.

20...♗b7 21.♗xb7 ♘xb7 22.♘xb6

Equally effective is 22.♖b5 ♕c8 23.♖d5 ♘bc5 24.♖exe5! ♕xa8 25.♖xd7 ♘xd7 26.♕xd7.

22...♘xb6 23.♕xd8† ♘xd8 24.♖xe5 ♔f8 25.♖xa5 ♘xc4 26.♖a8

White has a large, probably decisive advantage.

12...♗e6



13.e5! dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖exd8

No better is 14...♖axd8 15.♘xc7 ♖e7 16.♘xe6 ♖xe6 17.♗e3 ♘d3 18.♖e2! The most accurate. 18...e4 19.♖d1 Black faces serious troubles, for instance 19...♖de8 20.♘xe4! ♘xb2 21.♖xb2 ♘xe4 22.♖xb7 ♘xg3 23.♖dd7!+– Harika – Salman, Jodhpur 2003.

15.♘xc7 ♖ac8 16.♘xe6 fxe6

After 16...♘xe6 17.♖xe5 White remain with an extra pawn, while Black fails to prove his compensation, for example: 17...b6 (17...♖xc4 18.♖xa5 ♘e8 19.♖d5!±) 18.♗e3 ♖xc4 19.♗xb6 ♖d2 20.♖b5± Cech – Jirovsky, Czech Republic 2000.

17.b3!?

I really like this "human" move. Still, 17.♖e2 should also be enough for an advantage.

17...e4 18.♖b1 ♖d3

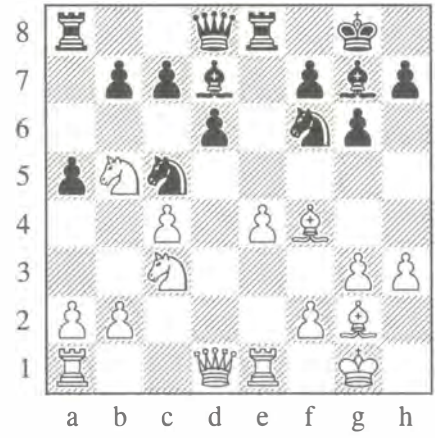
Black's best chance was 18...♘d5!, but also here after 19.♘xd5 exd5 20.♗g5 ♖d7 21.cxd5 ♖xd5 22.h4! White's advantage is clear, due to his bishop pair and Black's weak central pawn.

19.♘b5 ♘fd7 20.♗f4

With an obvious positional advantage, Ki. Georgiev – J. Ivanov, Bulgaria 1991.

13.♗f4

This is one of the critical positions of the whole line.



13...♗xb5

This has been Black's most common choice, although it is clearly a rather double-edged idea. Black removes the annoying knight and gets a bit more space for his pieces, but the weakness of the c7-pawn and the powerful enemy bishops might spell trouble for him in the long run.

Here are a few of the other options:

13...♕c8 runs into a thematic tactical strike for this variation: 14.♘xc7! ♕xc7 15.♗xd6 ♕c8 16.e5 ♘h5 Payen – Seeman, Helsinki, 2000, and now the simple 17.♗xc5N ♘xg3 18.♗d6! ♘f5 19.♘d5 would have given White a clear advantage.

13...h6 allows the very same idea: 14.♘xc7! ♕xc7 15.♗xd6 ♕c8 (also after 15...♕b6 16.e5 ♗c6 17.♗xc5 ♕xc5 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.exf6 ♖xe1† 20.♕xe1 ♗xf6 21.♘e4 White remains with a healthy extra pawn) 16.e5 White will regain the piece while keeping a material

advantage. Still, the following continuation was certainly not the way for Black to try and salvage his position: 16...♗xh3? 17.♗xh3 ♕xh3 18.exf6 ♖xe1† 19.♕xe1+– Barsov – Malyshev, Abu Dhabi 2003.

13...♗c6 prevents the aforementioned tactical threat, but leaves White with a pleasant position all the same. 14.♕c2 ♘fd7 15.♖ad1 White's army is well coordinated and he needs just to find a suitable moment for jumping with his knight to d5. 15...♘e5 16.♘d5 (16.♗e3!N seems to be even stronger, for instance 16...♕c8 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 and Black is tied to the defence of the c7-pawn.) 16...♗xb5 17.cxb5 ♖b8?! (Black should have opted for 17...c6, although after 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.♘e3! White maintains a pleasant advantage.) 18.♗e3 White's positional advantage is beyond any doubts, Kalinitschew – Hannebauer, Berlin 2007.

14.cxb5

The doubled pawns can hardly be considered a weakness – it is more important to increase the control over the light squares, as well as opening the c-file.

14...♘fd7 15.♕c2 ♘e6

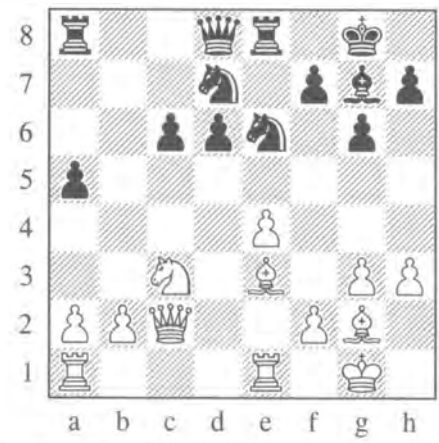
Another game saw 15...♘b6 16.♖ad1 ♕f6 Hernandez Onna – Vogt, Leipzig 1975, and now White has a nice tactical shot: 17.e5!N dxe5 18.♗e3 ♘e6 (Black is not helped by 18...♕e7 19.♘d5 ♘xd5 20.♗xc5! ♘b4 21.♕c1 ♕e6 22.a3 trapping the knight.) 19.♗xb7 ♖ab8 20.♘d5 ♘xd5 21.♗xd5 with a big positional advantage.

16.♗e3 c5

Black eliminates the backward c7-pawn, but now the pawns on c6 and d6 may become vulnerable. There is also 16...♗d4 17.♖ad1 ♗xe3 18.♖xe3 ♘ec5 Ki. Georgiev – Ilincic, Belgrade 2000. Now White should continue with 19.f4N intending a central breakthrough with e4-e5 when the circumstances are right.

17.bxc6 bxc6

Now in Mchedlishvili – Hartoch, Amsterdam 2004, White automatically moved the queenside rook to the centre. Instead he should have played:



18.♖ed1!N ♕c7 19.♖ac1

The immediate threats are 20.♘b5 and 20.♘d5.

19...♘ec5 20.♘a4

White maintains unpleasant pressure along the c- and d-files.

C223) 11...♗d7

This is another big tabiya with more than 400 games on the database. Black's main idea is to play ...♕c8 (attacking h3), intending to meet ♔h2 with ...♖e5 followed by ...♖h5.

12.♔h2!?

I like this prophylactic move, which prevents the threat before it even occurs. White's general strategy in this line is to restrain any counterplay before gradually completing development.

12.♗f4 used to be a principal line here, but recent games have shown that after 12...h6 13.♕c2 ♘fxe4! Black is doing okay.



Now we will consider **C2231) 12...h6** and **C2232) 12...a6** in detail, as well as:

12...♖e5

This thematic move has only been played once, in the game Shvedov – Chuprov, St Petersburg 1999. White can obtain an excellent position with some resolute play, beginning with:

13.f4N ♖h5 14.f5!

This is an important antidote against Black's attacking manoeuvre, which should always be remembered.

14...♘g4†

No better is 14...gxf5 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♘d5 ♗g6 17.♘e7† ♔h8 18.♘xg6† hxg6 19.b4! and Black's knight does not have a good square, for instance: 19...♘e6 20.♘xe6 fxe6 21.♖xe6 ♕d7 22.♕e2±

15.♕xg4 ♗xd4 16.♕e2! ♗e5 17.♘d5!

The rook on h5 can hardly feel comfortable with ♘f4 on the way.

12...♕c8

This immediately justifies White's last move. Having already protected the h3-pawn, he can now afford the time to prevent the intended ...♖e5.

13.f4! a5 14.e5!

This "concrete" approach to the position works well here.

14...dxe5

14...♘h5 15.♘f3 does not change much.

15.fxe5 ♘h516.♘f3!

Now Black must constantly be on guard against g4 winning a piece. In certain positions he can get enough compensation by sacrificing his bishop, but sooner or later it will become a real threat.

16...b6

After 16...f5 17.♗e3 ♘e6 18.♘d5! White keeps an obvious positional advantage.

17.♗e3

There is no point in rushing with 17.g4?! ♗xg4 18.hxg4 ♕xg4 when Black has a dangerous initiative.

17...♖b8

This position occurred in Sheers – Mano, e-mail 2001. Now was the right moment for:



18.g4N ♗xg4 19.hxg4 ♕xg4 20.♕d4! ♕xd4

There is nothing better.

21.♗xd4 ♘d3 22.♘d5! ♘xe1 23.♖xe1

White has a clear advantage thanks to his tremendously active minor pieces.

C2231) 12...h6 13.♖b1

White continues the strategy involving useful prophylactic moves.

13...♕c8

Most other sensible moves have been tried as well. Here are a few of the main ones:

13...a6 leads straight to line C2232.

13...♖e5?! Once again this does not work properly. 14.b4 (This is my preferred choice, although the thematic 14.f4 ♖h5 15.f5! is also strong.) 14...♘e6 Wastney – Schlosser, Yerevan 1996. Now White should play the simple 15.♘f3!N ♖h5 16.♔g1! when it is obvious that the rook is misplaced on h5.

13...a5 14.♘db5

Also worthy of consideration is 14.b3!?.

14...♗c6

14...♗xb5 15.cxb5 ♘fd7 16.f4 (also interesting was: 16.♗e3!? h5 17.♕c2 h4 18.g4 g5 19.♔g1±) 16...a4 17.♕c2 h5 Serafimov – Dochev, Bankia 1992. Now White should have played 18.♗d2N maintaining a pleasant positional advantage. Obviously 18...h4 is nothing to worry about, as after 19.g4 Black's h-pawn might become weak.



15.♕c2N

This looks clearly preferable to 15.f3, as occurred in Maric – Eidelson, New Delhi 2000.

15...♕d7 16.♗f4

White has a pleasant game. It is important to note that Black has no time to double his rooks along e-file, since after:

16...♖e7 17.♖bd1 ♖ae8?!

White strikes with:

18.♘xc7! ♕xc7 19.♗xd6 ♕b6 20.♗xe7 ♖xe7 21.e5 ♘fd7 22.f4

With an obvious advantage.

14.b4 ♘e6 15.♘xe6

Black is absolutely fine after 15.♘b3 ♘g5!.

15...♗xe6 16.♘d5

Now we see the value of the earlier ♖a1-b1.



16...♕d8

I doubt that Black has anything better, although as usual we will check a few alternatives.

16...c6 was played in C. Horvath – Kovalev, Debrecen 1992. Now White should have played the natural and critical: 17.♘xf6†!N ♗xf6 18.♗xh6 (But not 18.♕xd6 ♕d8! 19.♕xd8 ♖axd8 20.♗xh6 ♗xc4∓) 18...♗xc4 19.♕xd6 ♗e5 20.♕d2 Black will have problems demonstrating compensation.

16...♘d7 17.♗b2

The exchange of dark-squared is clearly in White's favour, as Black will lose a good deal of his dynamic potential and may also suffer from the weak dark squares on the kingside.

17...♗xb2

Clearly inferior is 17...c6?! 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♘e3! when the d6-pawn becomes a target. 19...♕c7 20.♕d4† ♘f6 (even worse

is 20...f6 21.♖ed1± when Black loses his pawn) 21.f4 and White has nice attacking prospects.

18.♖xb2 ♕d8

Intending to transfer the queen to f6. Another option is 18...a5 Kharitonov – Kalashnikov, Moscow 2008. Now I prefer not to give Black the a-file and thus suggest 19.b5N maintaining the advantage.

19.f4!

This is exactly the right moment to start aggressive action. Note that the queen's rook can easily swing over to f2 to join the attack.

19...a5 20.b5

Once again it makes sense to keep the a-file closed.

20...a4 21.♘e3 ♕f6

21...♘c5 should be met by 22.♕d4! taking control over the key a1–h8 diagonal. White has an obvious advantage.

22.♖f2 ♘b6 23.f5! gxf5

If 23...♗xc4 24.♕c1! intending ♘g4 White develops a decisive offensive.

24.exf5

Black faces serious problems in Avrukh – Kantsler, Israeli league 2004.

17.♗b2 c6 18.♘e3!

On this occasion White must avoid simplifications for the time being. After 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♕c2 ♗xb2 20.♖xb2 ♕f6! Black was absolutely fine in Arsovic – Markovic, Belgrade 2003.

18...a5 19.a3

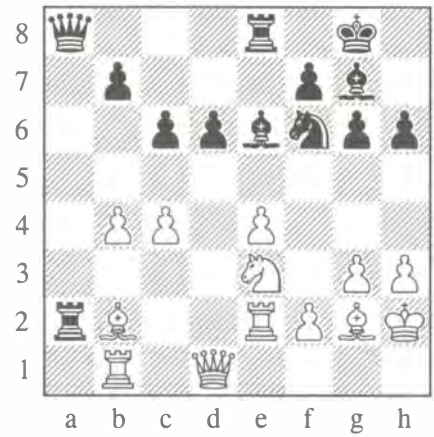
On this occasion 19.b5 is not really an option, as the a2-pawn is hanging.

19...axb4 20.axb4

This position is certainly playable for Black, but still White's chances seem preferable, thanks to his space edge and the weakness of the d6-pawn. Here is a good example:

20...♖a2 21.♖e2! ♕a8

This was Tadic – Markovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2005.Now the strongest continuation would have been:



22.♖c2!N

Maintaining control. Instead 22.♕xd6 ♖d8 23.♕f4 ♖d3 allows Black reasonable compensation.

22...♖d8 23.♖d2 ♕a4 24.♕c1±

White maintains all the pluses of his position.

C2232) 12...a6 13.♖b1

Again we see this calm prophylactic move.



13...h6

Black also decides to play the waiting game. He has also tried:

13...♖b8 14.b4 ♘e6 15.♗e3 h6 16.♕d2 ♔h7 (Or 16...♘g5 17.f3 ♕c8 18.h4 ♘e6 19.♘b3 with a nice advantage.) This position occurred in Izeta Txabarri – Lezcano Jaen, Las Palmas 1995, and now I suggest: 17.f4N b5 Black needs to look for counterplay somewhere. 18.cxb5 axb5 (Worse is 18...♘xd4 19.♗xd4 axb5 20.e5! dxe5 21.fxe5 ♘g8 22.♕f2± when White dominates.) 19.♘b3± and White is clearly in control.

13...b5 14.cxb5 axb5

Cvitan – Loffler, Switzerland 2001. Now of course the principled reaction would be:

15.♘dxb5N ♗xb5 16.♘xb5 ♘cxe4

After 16...♖xa2 17.♘c3 ♖a6 18.b4 ♘cd7 19.♕c2± White keeps a slight but long-term advantage, due to his bishop pair and Black's weak c7-pawn.

17.♕c2 ♕d7 18.a4 c6 19.♘c3!

19.♘d4 d5 looks perfectly playable for Black.

19...♘xc3 20.♖xe8† ♕xe8 21.bxc3

It seems to me that White keeps a small edge everywhere; for instance

21...d5 22.c4 ♘e4 23.cxd5

Better than 23.♗f4 ♘c3.

23...cxd5 24.♗f4±

14.b4 ♘e6 15.♗e3



15...♘g5

This is the most common move. The main alternative is:

15...♘xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗e6

16...c5? 17.bxc5 dxc5 18.♗xc5 ♖c8 19.♗b6 ♕e7 20.e5 ♘h7 21.♘d5 was dreadful for Black in Ilic – Miljanic, Nis 1997.

17.♘d5 b5 18.♖c1 ♖c8

No better is 18...c6 19.♗b6! ♕b8 20.♗c7 ♕b7 21.♘xf6† ♗xf6 22.♗xd6 ♗xc4 23.e5 ♗g7 24.♕d2 with definite pressure.

This position was reached in Vukic – Ilic, Vrnjacka Banja 1998. Now White should not hurry to exchange on b5 but instead play:

19.♕d2N

With the possible continuation:

19...c6 20.♗b6 ♕d7 21.♘xf6† ♗xf6 22.c5 dxc5 23.♕xd7 ♗xd7 24.♗xc5

Black will suffer in this endgame, due to his weak queenside pawns.

16.f3

Usually we would prefer to avoid this move, but here it is more or less forced, in order to defend e4 while also preparing h3-h4 without allowing a check on g4.

16...♕c8 17.h4 ♘e6 18.♘d5

Despite the minor positional concession, White has seized a lot of space while his opponent remains huddled on the back three ranks.

18...♕d8 19.♘xe6 ♗xe6 20.♕d2 ♔h7 21.♗d4±

White maintained a pleasant edge in Blagojevic – Markovic, Niksic 1997.

D) 8...c6

Finally we arrive at Black's most popular and flexible 8th move.

9.h3



Now we will consider in detail: **D1) 9...a6** and **D2) 9...♖e8**. after a quick round-up of the less common alternatives.

The big main line is 9...♕b6, which will be considered in the following chapter.

9...exd4 10.♘xd4 reaches line C1.

9...♕a5 is considered in Line F32 of chapter 27 via the 6...c6 move order.

9...♘e8 10.♖e1 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♕b6 12.♘b3 transposes to Line B3 of the following chapter.

9...h6

This does not have much sense.

10.♗e3 ♕e7

Compared with line B there is no time for the ...♘h7-g5 manoeuvre in view of: 10...♘h7?! 11.♕d2±

11.♕d2 ♔h7

Black can hardly afford to play so passively in the opening, as shown by the following example.

12.♖ad1 ♖d8 13.♖fe1 a6

Desperately searching for some activity, but this only worsens Black's position. Now in the game Rantanen – Walsh, Moscow 1956, White could have created major problems for his opponent with:

14.c5! dxc5 15.dxe5 ♘g8 16.♘a4!±

D1) 9...a6 10.♗e3



10...♖e8

As usual, Black would be ill-advised to seek queenside activity prematurely.

10...b5?

This can be more or less refuted by the following typical response.

11.c5! b4

11...dxc5, Dautov – Sutovsky, Bad Homburg 1997, might lead to immediate disaster after the obvious: 12.dxe5 ♘e8 13.♗xc5+–

12.♘a4 d5

There is also 12...♘xe4, but Black is far from solving his problems here too. 13.cxd6 ♘xd6 14.♘xe5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♘c4 (if 15...♗xe5 16.♗c5! Black unavoidably loses material) 16.♗c5 ♖e8 17.f4N with an obvious positional advantage, Jirka – Schauer, Plzen 2000.

13.♗g5 ♕c7 14.♗xf6!

A very strong and concrete approach.

14...♘xf6

Or 14...♗xf6 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘b6 ♖b8 17.exd5 and Black remains a pawn down.

15.exd5

Now the play proceeds along a more or less forced pathway:

15...♘xd5 16.♘xe5 ♗xe5 17.dxe5 ♕xe5 18.♖e1 ♕f6 19.♗xd5! cxd5 20.♘b6 ♖b8 21.♘xd5 ♕xb2 22.c6

The mighty passed pawn easily decides the result.

22...♗xh3 23.♖b1 ♕g7 24.c7+–

Gagunashvili – Bayramov, Urumia 2008.

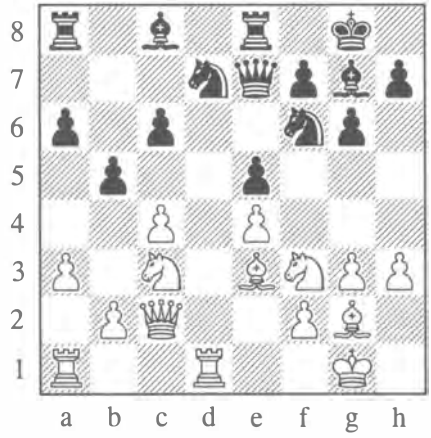
11.♕c2

Also quite promising is 11.d5 cxd5 12.cxd5 b5 13.♘d2, but Black's position seems to be more or less acceptable after 13...♘b6.

11...b5 12.dxe5 dxe5

Only once has Black tried 12...♘xe5 13.♘xe5 dxe5. In this case, after 14.♖fd1 ♕e7 15.cxb5! White maintains better chances, for instance: 15...cxb5 (15...axb5 16.a4±) Milos – Fedorowicz, Buenos Aires 1991, and now simply 16.♘d5!N ♘xd5 17.exd5 ♗f5 18.♕d2 ♖ac8 19.♖ac1 gives White the advantage, since Black is unable to set up a blockade on d6.

13.♖fd1 ♕e7 14.a3



14...h6

I also examined the more natural 14...♗b7 15.♖d2!? (Also worthy of consideration was 15.♘d2 intending to meet 15...♘f8 with 16.cxb5 cxb5 17.a4! bxa4 18.♘c4± with definite pressure.) 15...♖ed8 16.♖ad1 a5 17.♗f1 ♖ac8 (17...b4 is worse in view of 18.♘a4 bxa3 19.bxa3 when 19...c5? loses a pawn due to: 20.♘xc5 ♘xc5 21.♖xd8† ♖xd8 22.♗xc5±) 18.b4! axb4 19.axb4 White has long-term pressure, due to the passivity of Black's light-squared bishop. Obviously Black cannot capture on b4 in view of 20.♗b6 winning material.

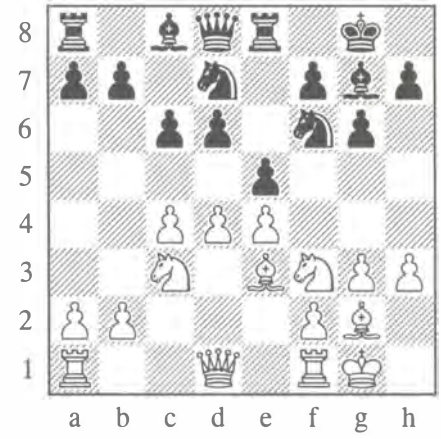
15.b4 ♗b7 16.♘d2 ♖ac8

This was seen in the game Lelievre – Viaud, France 1989. Here White should continue with:

17.♘b3N ♖ed8 18.♖ac1 ♗a8 19.♘e2±

Maintaining a stable advantage thanks to the more harmonious position. Black will have particular difficulty finding a useful role for his light-squared bishop.

D2) 9...♖e8 10.♗e3



10...exd4

As usual Black has tried virtually all possible moves, but in my opinion only the following idea deserves to be mentioned specifically:

10...a5 11.♕c2 a4

11...exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘c5 13.♖ad1 would just transpose to the main line below.

12.♖ad1 ♕a5 13.♖fe1 ♕b4

It is more reliable to play 13...exd4 14.♘xd4, reaching a position examined via the move order 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 c6 move order, in line C1.

14.c5!

Again this move is very strong.

14...dxc5 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♖xe5 17.f4 ♖e8 18.e5 ♘d7 19.♘e4 ♗f8

Paci – Pelle, Paris 2000. Now White could have secured a big advantage with:



20.♗d2!N ♕b6 21.♗c3±

11.♘xd4 ♘c5

11...a5 12.♕c2 reaches a position from line C1.

12.♕c2 a5

The only reliable alternative is 12...♕e7, when White should react with 13.♖fe1. (Certainly if it is possible we should always avoid playing f2-f3, especially when h2-g3 has already been played.)



Now 13...a5 would transpose to 12...a5, so we will examine two other possibilities:

a) Of course it is important to check the greedy option: 13...♘fxe4? This move can be punished by the following forcing sequence. 14.♗xe4! (I have taken a slight liberty with the move order. The game actually continued 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4 15.♗xe4 ♕xe4, but Black could also have considered 15...c5!?, as played in a few games. The text move leads to the same position while sidestepping this possibility.) 14...♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♕xe4 (15...c5? is useless here due to 16.♗g5) 16.♗d2 ♕xe1† 17.♖xe1 ♖xe1† 18.♗xe1 ♗xd4 19.♗c3 (19.g4!? is also interesting) 19...♗xc3 20.♕xc3 ♗xh3 21.♕b4! Without this important detail Black would be fine. In my opinion it is tough for Black to hold this position, for instance: 21...b6 22.♕xd6 c5 23.♕e7!± and Black did not manage to survive, Shamkovich – Baljon, Amsterdam 1979.

b) 13...♗d7 14.♘b3!

This excellent move enables White to remove the pressure against the e4-pawn.

14...♗e6

14...♘xb3 15.axb3 Now Black must take time out to defend the a-pawn. 15...a6 (15...c5 16.♕d2 ♗c6 17.♖ad1± leaves White with an obvious positional advantage, A. Petrosian – Akopian, Yerevan 1988.) 16.♖ad1 ♗e6 17.♕d2! Now the weakness of the b6-square becomes very important, as we can see from the following line: 17...♖ad8 18.♗b6 ♖c8 (18...♖d7 is well met by 19.f4± when the threat of f5 is very unpleasant.) We have been following the game Burmakin – Iskusnyh, Novgorod 1995. Now White could simply have grabbed the d6-pawn with 19.♕xd6 ♕xd6 20.♖xd6 ♘d7 21.♗e3, keeping a healthy extra pawn.

15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.b3

Now White can look to exploit his "extra" kingside pawn.

16...♖ad8 17.♖ad1 ♗c8 18.f4 ♘d7

Raicevic – F. Portisch, Odzaci 1978. Here White missed a strong opportunity:



19.e5!N

Intending 20.♘e4.

19...f6 20.♘e4!

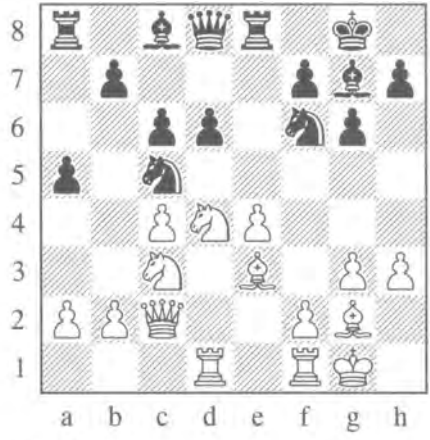
Still we see this powerful knight manoeuvre.

20...fxe5 21.♘d6 ♖f8 22.f5±

Black has a difficult position.

13.♖ad1

There have been more than two hundred games played from this position, but for me the evaluation is obvious. White has achieved an optimal arrangement of his pieces and his chances are clearly higher.



13...♕e7

Here are a few alternatives that I considered to be worth mentioning.

13...a4?? is a blunder in view of: 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♗xc5+–

13...♕c7?

This is also a serious inaccuracy, as it allows White to strike immediately with the elegant:

14.♘db5! cxb5 15.♘xb5 ♕e7 16.♘xd6 ♘a6

16...♘e6 17.e5!N So far White has only captured immediately on e8, which I believe to be less accurate than the text. 17...♘d7 (Another option is 17...♘h5 18.♘xe8 ♕xe8 19.♕e4! Threatening 20.g4 19...f5 20.exf6 ♘xf6 21.♕c2 intending 22.♖fe1. White is clearly better.) 18.♘xe8 ♕xe8 19.f4± This kind of position is strongly in White's favour, as it is difficult for Black to develop his queenside.

17.♘xe8 ♘xe8 18.f4

Intending to advance the e-pawn.

18...♘b4 19.♕f2 ♗f8

If 19...♘xa2 20.♖a1 ♗e6 (or 20...♘b4 21.♗c5 ♕d7 22.♖fd1 ♘d3 23.♕e3 ♘xc5 24.♖xd7 ♘xd7 25.e5±) 21.♖xa2 ♗xc4 22.♖aa1 ♗xf1 23.♖xf1± White's bishop will be very strong after the imminent e4-e5 advance.

20.b3

White was clearly better in Szmetan – Milos, Buenos Aires 1991.

13...♘fd7

This should me met by a calm reaction.

14.b3

14.♘b3 was also a good move, but I like the idea of defending the c4-pawn in advance, thus preventing Black's threats before they even occur. White is firmly in control, and I just want to share with the reader the following nice line:

14...♕b6 15.♖b1 ♕c7

The desirable 15...♕b4 runs into 16.♘db5! when it suddenly transpires that the queen is not so well placed on b4.

16.♖fd1 ♘b6

This position occurred in Makarov – Askarov, Tomsk 2006. Now White could

have obtained a big advantage with the following thematic blow:



17.♘db5!N cxb5 18.♘xb5

Now the following line looks natural:

18...♕e7 19.♘xd6 ♘bd7 20.♘xe8 ♕xe8 21.f4 b6 22.e5!

It is essential to restrict Black's dark-squared bishop.

22...♗b7 23.♗xb7 ♘xb7 24.♕g2 ♘bc5 25.a3±

14.♖fe1 a4

I doubt that Black has anything better.

14...♗d7 looks a bit passive, but this is not the biggest problem for Black, since after 15.♗f4! it is hard for him to deal with the threat of ♘xc6 followed by ♗xd6, for example: 15...♖ad8 (after 15...♘h5 16.♘xc6! ♗xc6 17.♗xd6 ♕e6 18.♗xc5 ♕xc4 19.♗d6± and Black has no compensation for the pawn, Malaniuk – Mohr, Nova Gorica 2003.) 16.♘b3! ♗e6 17.♘xa5 ♘h5 18.♗e3 ♕c7 19.♘b3± White had a healthy extra pawn in Vasilev – Maherramzade, Medellin 1996.

14...♘fd7 15.b3!

This is why I consider 14...a4 to be more accurate. The text move not only prevents here Black from attacking the c4-pawn, but also from opening up the a-file for his rook. Here is one illustrative line:

15...h5 16.f4 ♕f8

There is also 16...h4 17.g4 ♘f6 18.♗f2 ♘xg4 19.hxg4 ♗xg4 Goczo – Stupavski, Budapest 2005, and now the natural 20.♗f3N would have left Black without sufficient compensation.

17.♗f2 ♘e6

This was Bocharov – Apicella, Internet 2002. Here I suggest:



18.♘xe6!N ♖xe6 19.♘a4!

Black's position is very difficult. He has no active play and the b6-square requires constant observation.

15.f4

15.♗f4 is not so strong in view of 15...♘fd7, Guimard – Olivera, Buenos Aires 1964.

15...♘fd7

We must also pay close attention to:

15...♘fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♕xe4 18.♗f2 ♕xe1† 19.♗xe1 ♗xd4† 20.♖xd4 ♖xe1† 21.♔f2 ♗f5

After this forced sequence I do not believe that Black has enough compensation for his material deficit.

22.♕d2 ♖a1

Another option is 22...♖h1 23.♔g2 c5 24.♔xh1 cxd4 25.♕xd4 ♗xh3 26.♕xd6 ♗e6 27.♕d4± and it looks like White should convert his material advantage, Dautov – Akopian, Tbilisi 1989.

So far we have been following the game

Moncelli – Bilic, Bratto 1988. At this point I found a serious improvement for White:

23.g4!N

Now my main line runs as follows:

23...♖xa2 24.♖xd6!

24.gxf5?? a3 might lead to the opposite result.

24...♗e6

24...a3 does not work now. White can give checks on d8, take on f5, give a check with the pawn on f6 and then with the queen on f8 and c5, with mate to follow.

25.f5! gxf5 26.♕g5† ♔f8 27.gxf5

With a decisive attack.

16.b4

16.♗f2 ♘b6 17.b3 is another move order.

16...axb3 17.axb3 ♘b6

Black has managed to open the a-file for his rook, but this is not enough to make up for White's central dominance.

18.♗f2 ♗d7

18...♖a3 occurred in Kopylov – Seifert, internet 2004. Now White has a wide choice of interesting possibilities, but my own preference is 19.♖a1N with the idea to exchange Black's only active piece.

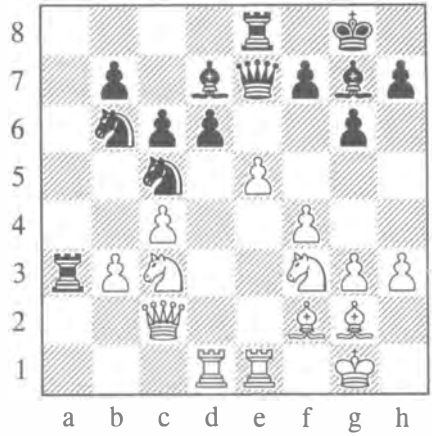
19.♘f3

White has achieved a model arrangement of his pieces. Now he threatens not only ♗xc5 or b4, but also e5.

19...♖a3?!

Black must have either overlooked or underestimated his opponent's next move. Somewhat stronger would have been 19...♗e6, although here it looks tempting for White to make the transition to a strategically advantageous position by means of 20.♗xc5 dxc5 21.e5.

20.e5!±



The opening of the centre was clearly favourable for White in Greenfeld – Koneru, Lippstadt 2004.

Conclusion:

The system with 6...♘bd7 and ...e5 is considered to be one of Black's most principled responses to the Fianchetto system, and rightly so. From a long-term perspective, the pawn structure following the typical ...exd4 exchange should favour White, who dominates the centre. The main challenge for the first player is likely to come in the early stages of the game, when he must strive to develop his pieces on purposeful squares while restraining the opponent's tactical opportunities. His plans will usually involve the moves h3 and ♗e3, followed by a queen move to c2 (often to defend the e4-pawn) and finally centralizing the rooks, typically on d1 and e1. If he can achieve all of this then he will invariably stand very well in the middlegame, unless Black has really achieved something concrete.

Obviously Black has plenty of resources as well, and there are a few particular lines in which White has to be especially well prepared for a tactical confrontation. This is especially true of the Gallagher variation, which we encountered in line C21. The good news is that, in this and other lines, White's chances appear to be higher as long as he plays precisely.

Chapter 29

King's Indian



9...♕b6

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4 c6 9.h3 ♕b6

10.♖e1

A) 10...♖e8 491
B) 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 493
B1) 11...♖e8 12.♖e2!? 494
B11) 12...♘xe4 494
B12) 12...♘g4 495
B13) 12...♕b4 497
B2) 11...♘g4 498
B3) 11...♘e8 498

A) after 19... ♕xc3



20.♘b3!N

B11) after 13...♗xd4



14.a4!?N

B12) after 18...♕b4



19.♘cb5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4 c6 9.h3 ♕b6

This is the most theoretically challenging move, and the one I have always been most cautious about facing.

10.♖e1

I believe this to be the most promising line. White has other interesting options, including both the positional 10.d5 and the more aggressive 10.c5!? dxc5 11.dxe5 ♘e8 12.e6 fxe6 13.♘g5 ♘e5, but I failed to discover any advantage after either of them.

Now we must pay close attention to both **A) 10...♖e8** and **B) 10...exd4**.

10...♕b4 11.♗f1 is examined in Variation F32 of Chapter 27 via the 6...c6 move order.

10...a5 is not really a serious option due to the following strong idea: 11.c5! dxc5 12.♘a4! ♕a7 (after 12...♕c7 13.dxc5± Black must already have been regretting his 10th move in M. Novikov – Timoshin, St Petersburg 2001) 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 Black tries to complicate matters, but this does not bring him any relief. 14.♗e3 ♘fd7 15.♘xc5 ♘xc5 16.♕d6 b6 17.♘xe5 with a definite advantage for White, Bell – P. Littlewood, England 1997.

A) 10...♖e8 11.d5

Compared with the position after 10.d5, the inclusion of the mutual rook moves to the e-file definitely helps White, for reasons that will become apparent.

11...♘c5

If 11...c5 Black's pieces are somewhat misplaced for the closed position and White obtains a pleasant edge after: 12.a3 ♖f8 13.♗e3 ♕d8 14.♘d2 b6 15.♖b1 a6 16.b4± Timman – Day, Haifa 1976.

12.♖b1 a5

Black should postpone the capture in the centre until he is either forced to do it, or an otherwise suitable moment presents itself. The immediate exchange is premature:

12...cxd5 13.cxd5 a5 14.♗e3 ♗d7 15.♘d2

This is the optimal set-up for White's minor pieces. The light-squared bishop might also assist in the fight for the queenside after ♗f1 – just one example of how the inclusion of the moves ♖f1-e1 and ...♖f8-e8 was in White's favour. Quite a lot of games have been played from this position, but there is no doubt that White has a superior version of the main line, so I will only mention one illustrative game to show some ideas.

15...♕c7 16.♕e2

A worthy alternative is 16.♗f1.

16...♖ec8 17.♖ec1 ♘e8 18.b3

White slowly prepares the b4 advance.

18...b6 19.a3 f5 20.b4 axb4 21.axb4 ♘a6

Here I found an improvement over the game Fridman – Lykinov, Marijampole 1996:



22.exf5!N gxf5 23.♘f3! ♕d8

White was threatening 24.♘a4.

24.♘g5!

The knight will arrive on e6 with great effect. It is very important that the following tactical sequence turns out in White's favour.

24...f4

Objectively Black should try something else, but in that case White's superiority would not be in any doubt.

25.gxf4 exf4 26.♗xf4 ♖xc3 27.♖xc3 ♗xc3 28.♕d3 ♗g7 29.♕xh7† ♔f8 30.♕g6! ♕e7 31.♖b3+–

White has a crushing attack.

13.♗e3 ♕c7 14.♘d2

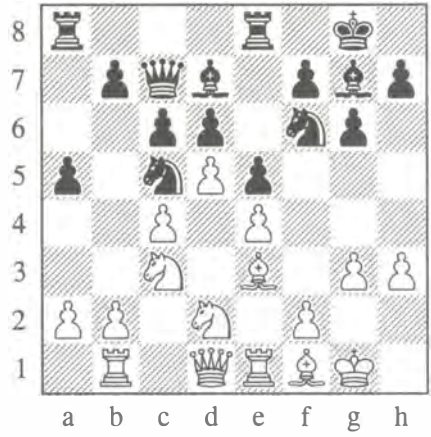
14.♗xc5 has been known to be premature ever since the famous game Portisch – Fischer, Sousse 1967, in which Black got a perfectly playable position after 14...dxc5 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.♘a4 ♗f8.

14...♗d7

Again premature is 14...cxd5?! 15.cxd5 ♗d7 (Senseless is: 15...♘d3 16.♖f1 ♘xb2?? 17.♕b3+–) 16.♕e2 and we have transposed to the note to Black's 12th move above.

15.♗f1

Once again we see this very important resource. Now after a possible exchange on d5 the bishop might become very useful on the f1–a6 diagonal.



15...♖ab8

Let's also look at these ideas:

After 15...♖ec8 I propose the modest 16.b3N intending a3 followed by b4. I do not see how Black can profit from his last move, as 16...cxd5 17.cxd5 is still very much in White's favour.

15...♖eb8 16.♕f3

Instead 16.dxc6 ♗xc6! gives Black a plenty of counterplay, for instance 17.♗g2 b6 18.b3 ♕b7 19.♕c2 ♖c8 20.a3 ♘e6 with balanced chances, Ivkov – Liberzon, Amsterdam 1969.

16...♘e8

White also keeps some pressure after 16...cxd5 17.cxd5 b5 18.♖ec1 ♕d8 19.b3± Black is tied to the defence of the b5-pawn. His problem is that advancing with ...b4 would present the c4-square to White's knight.

17.dxc6

I suggest that the reader pays close attention to the timing of this exchange. If the timing is correct, it can be one of his key positional ideas.

Having said that, I should also mention that there is nothing wrong with 17.b3 intending the standard plan of a3 and b4.

17...♗xc6

Black would ideally prefer to play 17...bxc6, but the problem is that after 18.♗xc5 dxc5 19.♘a4 Black will lose the c5-pawn, as White can always step up the attack with ♘b3 and ♕e3. If this were not the case, then White would have been better off eschewing the exchange on c6.

18.♘d5 ♕d8

18...♗xd5 does not solve Black's problems, as after 19.cxd5 White's bishop pair gives him the advantage.

Here I found a nice new idea:

19.♖bd1!N

White is planning ♘b1–c3 and he maintains better chances. This is much stronger than 19.♖ed1 ♘c7 20.♘b3 ♘7e6 when Black was alright in Panno – Stein, Caracas 1970.

I now analysed the following important line:

19...♘c7 20.♗g5! ♕xg5 21.♘xc7 ♖a7 22.♘b5! ♗xb5 23.cxb5 ♘e6 24.♗c4 ♕e7 25.♗xe6 ♕xe6 26.♖c1

White keeps a positional advantage.

16.a3!

White immediately exploits the fact that Black removed his rook from a8, meaning that the standard reaction of ...a4 is not available.

16...cxd5 17.cxd5 b5

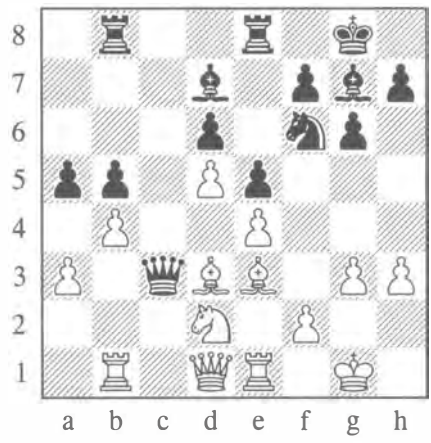
This was the idea behind Black's 15th move.

18.b4 ♘d3

Black should refrain from exchanging on b4, as after 18...axb4 19.axb4 ♘d3 20.♗xd3 ♕xc3 White is not obliged to defend his a3-pawn and can instead accelerate his queenside play by the following means: 21.♕e2 ♖ec8 (Very bad is 21...♗xh3? 22.♖ec1 ♕a3 23.♗xb5 followed by ♘c4) 22.♖b3 ♕c7 23.♔h2 This kind of position is clearly favourable for White, as he can slowly increase his pressure on the queenside, while Black is a long way from doing anything special on the kingside. 23...♕b7 24.♖a3 ♖a8 25.♖ea1 with ongoing pressure, Marovic – Tatai, Malaga 1968.

19.♗xd3 ♕xc3

Now I found a very strong novelty:



20.♘b3!N

After 20.♖b3 ♕c7 21.bxa5 ♕xa5 22.♔h2 ♖ec8 23.♕e2 ♖b7 24.♖eb1 ♖cb8 Black should hold the balance easily, Najdorf – Tal, Beograd 1970.

20...a4

The tactical justification behind the last move is seen after: 20...axb4? 21.♖c1 ♕b2 22.♖e2 ♕xa3 23.♖a1+– as well as: 20...♗xh3? 21.♖c1 ♕b2 22.♖e2 ♕xa3 23.♖a1 ♕xb4 24.♗d2+–

21.♕e2!

This is the second key point. White's knight is untouchable in view of the threat to trap the queen.

21...♕c8 22.♖ec1 ♕a6 23.♘a5 ♖ec8 24.♔g2

The b5-pawn is a constant weakness, and the c6-square will make an ideal future outpost for the knight. White's advantage is obvious.

B) 10...exd4

This is considered to be the principal reply according to theory.

11.♘xd4



Now Black has three moves that warrant serious attention: **B1) 11...♖e8**, **B2) 11...♘g4** and **B3) 11...♘e8**.

11...♘c5 is not so challenging, and White can soon develop his pieces in the optimal way: 12.♖b1 a5 13.♗e3 ♖e8 14.♕c2 ♘fd7

15.f4 a4 16.♗f2 ♕b4 17.a3 ♕a5 18.♖bd1 ♘b6 19.♘a2!? (19.♗f1 was a good option as well) 19...♗d7 20.♘b4 ♖ad8 21.♔h1 ♕a8 22.g4± We have reached a typical situation for this variation. Black is searching in vain for counterplay, while White slowly improves his position, Arencibia – Garza Marco, Santa Clara 2002.

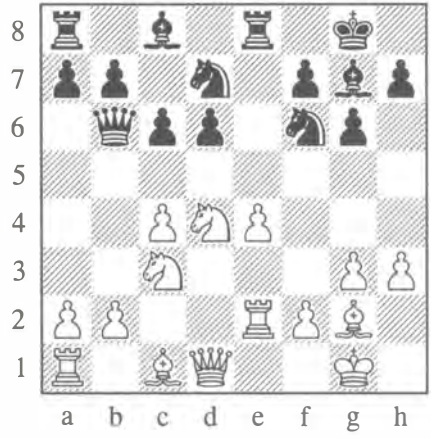
B1) 11...♖e8

This certainly looks like the most natural move. Here White must make an important decision.

12.♖e2!?

I believe this to be the most promising option. The main purpose is to defend the b2-pawn in order to facilitate the development of the dark-squared bishop, although we will see in the variations that the rook has some other uses on the second rank as well.

Also worthy of consideration is the main theoretical move 12.♘c2!?.



In this tense position there are three main ways in which Black may try to disrupt his opponent's plans: **B11) 12...♘xe4**, **B12) 12...♘g4** and **B13) 12...♕b4**.

As usual, there are a few less common alternatives to consider.

12...♘e5 13.b3 ♘fd7 14.♗e3 ♘c5 15.♖d2 just leaves Black with an inferior version of the positions reached in line B12.

12...♘c5 also does not create any problems after: 13.♗e3 ♕b4 14.♖c1! White easily defends the c4-pawn by indirect means. 14...a5 15.a3 ♕b6 Two games reached this position, but still I found an improvement:



16.♘f3!N with the following nice point: 16...♗e6 17.♕xd6 ♘fxe4 18.♘xe4 ♘xe4 19.♕f4 ♘c5 20.♕h4! and Black faces serious troubles.

B11) 12...♘xe4

This is certainly a critical line, although I still like White's chances.

13.♘xe4 ♗xd4

The other option is:

13...♕xd4 14.♗e3!

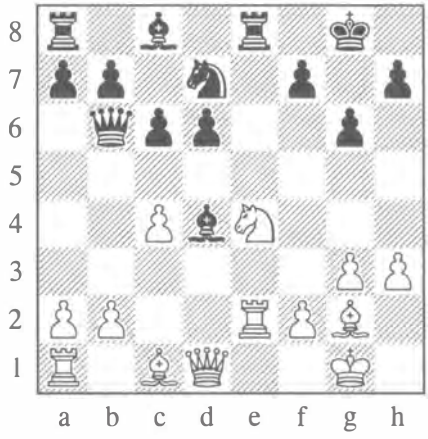
White will keep a nice initiative in the position without queens.

It is difficult to evaluate the position after 14.♘f6† ♘xf6 15.♕xd4 ♖xe2 16.♕xd6 ♘d7, but it seems to me that Black has good chances to hold.

14...♕xd1† 15.♖xd1 ♘e5 16.♘xd6 ♖d8 17.♖ed2 ♗xh3?

An obvious error, but even after 17...♗f8 18.c5 f6 19.b3 White is clearly better.

18.♗xh3 ♘f3† 19.♔f1 ♘xd2† 20.♖xd2+–
Kursova – Kirillova, Orel 2006.



14.a4!?N

This is a very interesting novelty. Apart from the incidental threat of 15.a5, the main idea is to activate the queen's rook via the a3-square.

The usual move is 14.♘xd6, but it seems to me that Black is doing alright after 14...♖xe2 15.♕xe2 ♘e5.

14...a5

This is the most natural move, although I checked a few others as well:

Black fails to obtain adequate compensation after: 14...♖xe4?! 15.♗xe4 ♘f6 16.♗g2 ♗e6 17.a5 ♕c5 18.♖a4!±

Also unsatisfactory is: 14...c5 15.a5 ♕c7 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.♖xe3 ♖e6 18.♖d3 White will regain the pawn, while maintaining serious pressure.

15.♖a3 ♖xe4!?

Perhaps this is the best chance to complicate the game, as the alternatives do not bring Black any relief:

15...♗g7 16.♗e3 ♕c7 17.♘xd6 ♖e7 18.c5
White is clearly better.

15...d5 This attempt to obtain some activity does not bring Black any relief. 16.♖b3 ♕a7 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.♘d6 ♖xe2 19.♕xe2 ♘f6 20.♗e3! ♗xe3 21.♖xe3 Faced with the threats of 22.♖e8† and 22.♖e7, Black is in big trouble.

16.♗xe4

Very unclear is 16.♖xe4 ♗xf2† 17.♔f1 ♘f8 18.♖b3 ♕a7.

16...♘e5 17.♗g2

I do not believe that Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange. The following point is very important:

17...♗e6 18.♗e3!?

18.b3 intending ♗e3 is also good enough.

18...♗xe3 19.♖axe3 ♘xc4

White is clearly better after 19...♗xc4 20.♖d2 ♗e6 21.b3 when the d6-pawn is falling.

20.♖xe6 fxe6 21.b3 ♘e5 22.♕xd6 ♘f7 23.♕xe6 ♖d8 24.♗f1!±

The vulnerability of Black's king should eventually tell.

B12) 12...♘g4 13.♖d2

It is important that White is not obliged to retreat with his knight, but can instead maintain its strong position in the centre.



13...♘ge5 14.b3 ♘c5 15.♖c2!

White intends to develop his dark bishop on its preferred home of e3. Obviously White could not play 15.♗b2? in view of 15...♘ed3 winning material.

15...a5

It is much too optimistic for Black to try: 15...♗xh3? 16.♗xh3 ♘xe4 17.♗e3! (but certainly not 17.♘xe4?? ♕xd4! 18.♕xd4 ♘f3† 19.♔f1 ♘xd4 when it is Black who emerges with extra material) 17...♘xc3 18.♖xc3 c5 Bagirov – Geller, Lvov 1978. Now the simplest route to victory would be: 19.♘e2N ♘f3† 20.♔h1 ♗xc3 21.♘xc3+–



16.♗e3 a4

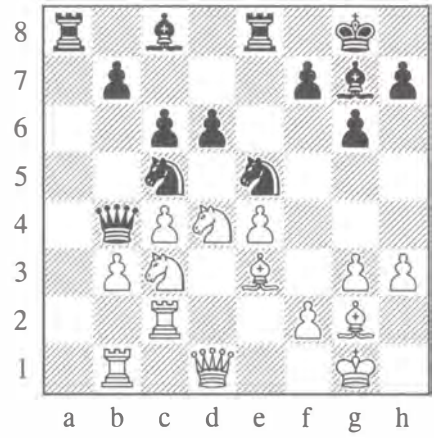
Black logically continues his play on the queenside. The problem is that he does not achieve anything concrete and White stays firmly in control.

17.♖b1 axb3 18.axb3 ♕b4

This looks like the most natural continuation, but unfortunately it meets with a beautiful refutation.

Black can hardly hope for an acceptable game by playing passively, as seen after 18...♕c7 19.♖d2 ♕e7 20.f4 ♘ed7 Borovikov – Schaefer, Senden 2005. Here White should have played 21.b4!N ♘e6 22.♘de2 with an obvious advantage.

Perhaps best is 18...♖a3!?N although even here after the forcing sequence 19.b4 ♘xc4 20.bxc5 ♕xc5 21.♕c1 ♘xe3 22.fxe3 ♗xd4 23.exd4 ♕xd4† 24.♔h2 I would prefer White's chances, despite the approximate material balance.



19.♘cb5!N

This attractive tactical solution creates serious problems for the defence. Less convincing is 19.♘a2 ♕a3 20.b4 ♘e6 21.♘c1 Fridman – Schaefer, Essen 2001, and now after 21...♘xd4!N 22.♗xd4 ♗e6 23.♖a2 ♕xa2 24.♘xa2 ♖xa2 Black has decent chances.

19...cxb5 20.♗d2 ♕a3 21.♘xb5 ♕a6 22.♘c7 ♕c6 23.♘xa8

The last few moves were forced. Now Black has a choice, but neither continuation brings him any relief.

23...b5

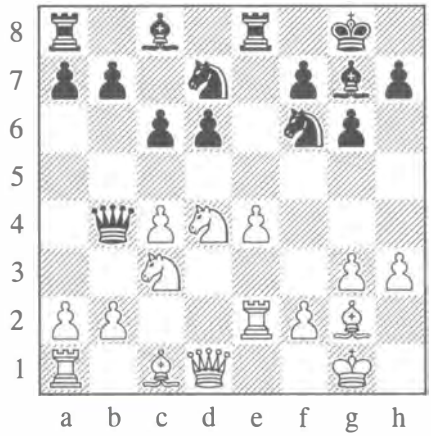
23...♗e6 hardly looks like an improvement after: 24.♖a2 ♘a6 25.f4 ♕c5† 26.♔h2 ♘c6 27.b4! ♕xc4 28.♖xa6 bxa6 29.♖c1+–

24.f4 ♕xa8 25.fxe5 ♗xe5 26.♗f4±

It is clear that Black faces serious problems in this line.

B13) 12...♕b4

This time Black tries to harass the c4-pawn.



13.♖c2

The rook takes full advantage of its position on the second rank.

13...♘c5 14.♗d2 ♕b6

Although this is undoubtedly the main line, we should not overlook the queen sacrifice: 14...♕xc4!? 15.♘cb5 cxb5 16.♖xc4 bxc4 17.♘b5!

White has to take action very quickly, otherwise he could easily slip into a worse position.

17...♘fxe4 18.♘c7 ♗f5

I also examined 18...♗e6 19.♘xa8 ♖xa8 20.♗e3 ♗xb2 21.♖b1 ♗g7 (21...♘c3 22.♕c2 ♘xb1 23.♕xb2 ♗f5 24.♕f6! ♘d7 25.♕xd6±) 22.♗d4 and it is hard to believe Black has enough compensation for the queen.

19.♘xa8 ♖xa8 20.g4 ♗xb2 21.gxf5 ♗xa1

This position occurred in Seglins – Remde, corr. 1990. Now I suggest:

22.♕xa1N ♘xd2 23.♕d4 c3 24.♕xc3 ♘de4 25.♗xe4 ♘xe4 26.♕c7

White keeps a definite edge.

15.♗e3 a5

It is very important to check the other possibilities:

Too risky is 15...♘fxe4? 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♘f5! c5 18.♘xg7 ♔xg7 19.♖e2 ♘f6 20.♕d2 ♖xe3? (A strange decision, but even after the relatively best 20...♗d7 21.♗h6† ♔g8 22.♖ae1 Black has serious problems defending the dark squares.) 21.♖xe3+– Stamenkovic – Djuric, Nis 1994.

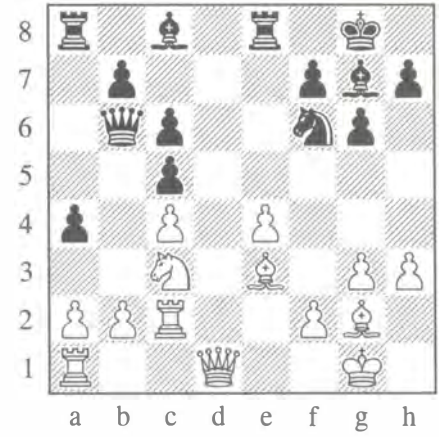
15...♕c7 16.f3 Usually White tries to avoid this move, but in this concrete situation I do not see any problems, as he will slowly improve his position and later play f3-f4. 16...a5 17.♕d2 ♗d7 18.♖d1 ♖ad8 Calleja Quintana – Roiz Baztan, Gijon 2000. Now I like the following arrangement: 19.♕f2N ♗c8 20.b3± and White's chances are better, thanks to his space advantage.

16.♘b3

I also spent some time on the tempting 16.♘xc6!? ♕xc6 (16...bxc6? 17.♕xd6 ♘fd7 18.♘a4 ♘xa4 19.♗xb6 ♘axb6 20.c5+–) 17.e5 Pragua – Zehm, corr. 2000, but eventually concluded that after 17...♘fe4!N 18.♗xc5 ♘xc3 19.♗xc6 ♘xd1 20.♗xe8 dxc5 21.♖xd1 ♗f5 22.♗a4 ♗xc2 23.♗xc2 ♗xe5 the endgame looks rather drawish.

16...a4 17.♘xc5 dxc5

Here I found an interesting improvement:



18.♖ac1!?N

I found nothing special for White after 18.♖b1 ♘d7 19.b3 (White also gets nowhere after 19.♖d2 ♘e5 20.♘xa4 ♕a5 21.b3 ♘xc4!) 19...axb3 20.axb3 ♕c7 21.f4 Kunte – Kotronias, Edinburgh 2003, and now after the accurate 21...♖d8!N 22.♕e1 ♗d4 Black has a decent game.

18...♖d8

Now the aforementioned idea of 18...♘d7 19.♖d2 ♘e5? does not work, because after 20.♘xa4 the c4-pawn is protected by the rook on c1.

19.♖d2 ♖xd2 20.♕xd2

White keeps the better chances, thanks to his superior pawn formation. It is important to note that Black cannot solve his problems in a radical way by means of:

20...♗e6 21.e5 ♘e8 22.f4 ♗xc4

In view of the unexpected:

23.♘xa4! ♖xa4 24.b3 ♗xb3 25.♗xc5 ♕c7 26.axb3 ♖a8 27.♖d1

White maintains a clear positional edge.

B2) 11...♘g4



12.♘ce2 ♘ge5 13.b3 ♘c5 14.♗e3 a5

14...♖e8 15.♖b1 a5 16.♖f1 is just another route to the same position.

15.♖b1 ♖e8 16.♖f1!

This great prophylactic move was played first by Botvinnik back in 1961!

Now Black fails to get any concrete counterplay and his pieces will soon be expelled from the centre.

16...♕d8

Another line is 16...♕c7 17.♕c2 ♘ed7 18.♘c3 ♘f6 (too passive is 18...♘f8 19.♖bd1 ♘fe6 20.♘de2 ♗f8 21.♕d2 ♘d7 22.♗h6 ♘g7 23.♖fe1± Botvinnik – Pachman, Germany 1961) 19.♖fe1 ♗d7 20.♖ed1 and White keeps a clear space advantage, Sergeev – Lundberg, Ceske Budejovice 1993.

17.♕c2 ♕e7 18.♘c3 ♘ed7 19.♖fe1 ♘f6 20.♖bd1 ♘fd7 21.f4

White continues to improve his position, while Black struggles to find any counterplay.

21...♕d8 22.♗f2 ♕b6 23.♖b1 ♕c7 24.♖e2 ♘b6 25.♖d1

White maintains all his pluses, Furman – Nezhmetdinov, Soviet Championship 1959.

B3) 11...♘e8

This may appear unexpected, but it has actually been the most popular choice according to the database. It is surprisingly awkward for White to develop his pieces in the desired way, and great precision is required.

12.♘b3 a5

This time the alternatives are not really impressive:

12...♕b4 13.♗f1 ♘c5 14.♗d2 gives White a very pleasant game, for instance 14...♘xb3 15.axb3 ♕b6 16.♗e3 ♕c7 17.♕d2 White

slowly improves his position, while Black remains passive. 17...b6 18.b4! ♗b7 19.♖ed1 White intends to continue with 20.c5 or 20.b5. 19...c5 20.bxc5 bxc5 21.♗g2 White's positional advantage is beyond any doubts, Matamoros Franco – Paramos Dominguez, Santa Clara 1999.

12...♘e5

This allows the strong thematic sacrifice:

13.c5! dxc5 14.♗e3 ♗e6 15.♘a4 ♕c7 16.♘axc5 ♗c4 17.♘d2 b6

More stubborn would be 17...♖d8, but also here after 18.♕c1 ♗b5 19.f4 ♘d3 (19...b6 20.fxe5 bxc5 21.♘f3 c4 22.♖d1!±) 20.♘xd3 ♗xd3 21.e5 White gets a stable advantage.

18.♕c2 bxc5 19.♘xc4 ♘xc4 20.♕xc4 ♗xb2

This was Ruck – Jobava, Dresden 2007. Now I found the following improvement:



21.♖ad1N ♘g7 22.♗xc5 ♖fd8 23.♖b1 ♗f6 24.f4 ♘e6 25.e5 ♘xc5 26.exf6! ♘e6 27.♗xc6 ♖d6

27...♖ac8 loses to 28.♖xe6 fxe6 29.♕xe6† ♕f7 30.♗d5!.

28.♗d5 ♕xc4 29.♗xc4 ♘d4 30.♖e7 ♖xf6 31.♖bb7

White has a strategically winning position.

13.♗e3 ♕b4

Black continues to pose problems. White must find a precise way to deal with the threats against his queenside pawns.

14.♘d4!

This is the correct way, although it would not be easy to determine this over the board.



14...a4

Obviously we must also consider both possible pawn captures.

14...♕xc4

This leads to a forced sequence:

15.♗f1 ♕b4 16.a3 ♕b6

16...♕xb2?? loses the queen after 17.♘a4.

17.♘e6 ♕xb2 18.♘xg7 ♘xg7 19.♘d5

Threatening 20.♗d4, trapping the queen.

19...♘e6

Mamedjarova – Umanskaya, Warsaw 2001. Now Dautov's recommendation from *ChessBase Magazine 91* looks strong:

20.♘c7! ♘xc7 21.♗d4 ♕xa1 22.♗xa1 ♘e8 23.f4!

White has a clear advantage, as his attacking chances are quite real.

14...♕xb2 15.♘a4 ♕a3 16.♕c2!N

This looks like a very strong novelty. Black's queen is in real danger, and he will have to make some serious concessions in order to extricate her.

16...♘c5

16...♘e5 does not help after: 17.♖ed1 ♕b4 18.♗f1!± Threatening 19.a3.

17.♘b6 ♖b8 18.♖ab1!

Less convincing is 18.♖ed1 ♘a6!.

18...♘d3

If 18...♘f6 19.♖ed1 Black must already lose material in view of the threatened 20.♗c1.

19.♖e2 ♘b4 20.♕d2 ♕d3 21.♕xd3 ♘xd3 22.♘xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖xb7

White has regained his pawn while keeping a very strong initiative. A sample continuation might be:

23...♘f6 24.♘b3 ♖a8 25.♗a7! a4 26.♘a5±

15.a3 ♕a5

Nobody seems to have tried 15...♕xb2. It does not seem to be so bad, as after 16.♘xa4 ♖xa4 17.♕xa4 ♘b6! Black has chances to obtain decent compensation for the exchange. Nevertheless after 18.♕a7 ♘xc4 19.♖eb1 ♕c3 20.♖c1 ♕b2 21.♖ab1 ♕a2 22.♘c2! White keeps the better chances.

16.f4

Another possible move order is 16.♕c2 ♘c5 17.♖ad1 ♘f6 18.f4 leading to the same position.

16...♘c5 17.♕c2 ♘f6

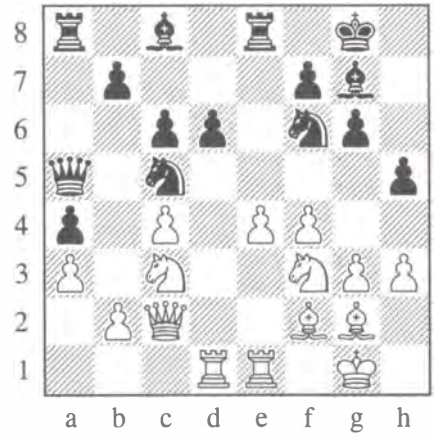
Clearly inferior is: 17...h5?! 18.♖ad1 ♘f6 19.♘f3 ♖e8 20.♘g5 Black's d6-pawn is hanging and retreating the bishop to f8 would be a clear admission of failure. Thus in the one practical encounter I found Black tried 20...♘e6, but after 21.♘xe6 ♗xe6 22.♖xd6 ♗xc4 23.♕f2 ♕c7 24.e5 ♘d7 25.♖ed1 ♗e6 26.♘e4± White was in total control, Fridman – Gladyszev, Port Erin 2002.

18.♖ad1 ♖e8 19.♗f2 h5

I also checked 19...♕c7 20.♘f3 ♘fd7 21.♗d4! and White should be much better after exchanging the dark-squared bishops.

Now I found a promising improvement:

20.♘f3!?N



There is no point in rushing with 20.f5 ♘fd7 21.fxg6 fxg6 22.♘f3 ♘e5 23.♖xd6 ♗e6 when Black has reasonable compensation, Vladimirov – Novopashin, Gorky 1954.

20...♗e6 21.♖xd6 ♗xc4 22.e5 ♘fd7 23.♘d2 ♗e6 24.♘ce4 ♘xe4 25.♘xe4

White has definite pressure.

Conclusion:

The 9...♕b6 variation deserves its own dedicated chapter, as it sets White a totally different set of challenges from the lines we encountered previously. Here White really has to work hard and show great resourcefulness (or a high standard of opening preparation) simply to get his pieces out without allowing an unpleasant tactical blow. Subtle manoeuvres like ♖e2-d2 (or c2) can make all the difference. In line B3 we saw a case where White left the pawns on b2 and c4 en prise at the same time, which was justified by some specific tactics.

Fortunately, there is a reward for all these difficult moves; after successfully repelling his opponent's early threats, White can look forward to a typically favourable middlegame thanks to his great control over the centre. As usual, I found several important improvements which I believe will pose considerable problems for adherents of Black's set-up.

Chapter 30

Modern Defence



Wade Defence

Variation Index

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♗g4

3.c4

A) 3...c6 502
B) 3...g6 502
C) 3...♘f6 505
D) 3...♗xf3 4.exf3 509
D1) 4...g6 510
D2) 4...c6 511
E) 3...♘d7 4.♘c3 515
E1) 4...♗xf3 515
E2) 4…e5 5.g3 516
E21) 5...♘gf6 516
E22) 5...♗xf3 518

C) after 18...♗c7



19.♕e1!N

D2) note to 10...cxd5



14.a4!?N

E1) after 12...♘b6



13.h5!N

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♗g4

This line is known as the Wade Defence, named after Bob Wade, the British IM who played it for many years.

3.c4

It is too early for us to play our usual fianchetto, since after 3.g3 Black has a strong positional idea at his disposal: 3...♗xf3 4.exf3 d5! with a very solid position.

This is the main branching point of the Wade Defence. The main lines we shall study are: **A) 3...c6**, **B) 3...g6**, **C) 3...♘f6**, **D) 3...♗xf3** and **E) 3...♘d7**.

A) 3...c6 4.♘c3 ♘d7

This position might also arise via the 3...♘d7 4.♘c3 c6 move order. White's two main options according to the theory are 5.e4 and 5.g3, but I prefer a less popular move that is rather aggressive:

5.d5

This fits perfectly with the rest of our anti-Wade repertoire, as will become clear if Black takes on f3.



5...♗xf3

The alternative is:

5...♘gf6

Then White shows another point to 5.d5: 6.♘d4!

Black's light-squared bishop looks misplaced on g4, as the following examples show:

6...♘e5

Veingold – Maki Uuro, Finland 1998, continued 6...c5 7.♘c2 e6 8.f3 (or 8.♘e3 ♗h5 9.g3± is also quite pleasant for White) 8...♗h5 9.e4 ♗e7 10.♗e2 a6 11.0–0 h6 12.a4 and White had a comfortable advantage, due to Black's badly placed bishop.

7.h3 ♗d7 8.e4 e6 9.dxe6!?

Changing the pawn structure is interesting, though obviously the natural 9.♗e2± would also retain the advantage.

9...fxe6 10.♗e2 ♗e7 11.f4 ♘f7 12.0–0 0–0

This position was reached in Gulko – Ardaman, Hawaii 1998, and now White can play simple chess:



13.♗e3!?N c5 14.♘f3 ♗c6 15.♗d3

This would maintain White's advantage.

6.exf3 g6 7.♗e3 ♗g7 8.♗e2 ♘gf6 9.0–0 0–0 10.♕b3

This leads to a line that will be examined via the 3...♗xf3 4.exf3 c6 5.♘c3 ♘d7 6.♗e2 move order (line D).

B) 3...g6

Not a very popular move order, but quite important for us, since we cannot play the

natural 4.♘c3 (see my notes after 2...g6 3.c4 ♗g7 on page 522).

4.♕b3!



In general this is a thematic move in this line, but this is the only moment when we will use it.

4...♕c8

The alternative is 4...♗xf3, but this looks like a concession to me: 5.♕xf3 c6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.e3 ♘f6 8.g3 This is usually the best way to develop the light-squared bishop. 8...♘bd7 9.♗g2 0–0 10.0–0 e6 (we shall examine the type of position that arises after 10...e5 11.d5 in the 4...♕c8 line) 11.b3 d5 12.♗b2 ♘b6 13.♕e2± White has a pleasant game with the bishop pair and a space advantage, Vukic – Puric, Jahorina 2003.

5.h3

The main point of White's previous move; now White can recapture with the queen on f3.

5...♗xf3

The passive 5...♗d7 was played in Velikov – Ivkov, Cannes 1990, and now White should play the natural 6.e4N ♗g7 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.♗e3 when after 8...e5 White has a pleasant choice between the calm 9.♖d1 and 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♖d1 ♘ge7 11.♗e2 0–0 12.0–0± when the black pieces are uncoordinated.

6.♕xf3 ♗g7 7.e3

Now I examined three options for Black, all of which lead to very different play.



7...c5

Black's two other options are:

7...♘f6 8.♘c3 0–0 9.g3

As mentioned above, the fianchetto seems the best way to develop the light-squared bishop.

9...♘bd7

The alternative is 9...c5 10.d5 when White has a nice version of the Benoni pawn structure. Let's see one example: 10...e6 11.♗g2 exd5 12.♘xd5! The point: White recaptures on d5 with a piece. 12...♘xd5 13.♕xd5 ♕c6 14.0–0 ♕xd5 15.♗xd5 ♘c6 16.♖d1 ♖fd8 White obviously has a long-term edge, thanks to his better pawn structure and the bishop pair, Jaworski – Mokry, Czech Republic 1999. White only needs to complete the development of his queenside, and this can be achieved by 17.♖b1N ♖d7 18.a3 a5 19.♗d2 when Black is doomed to a passive defence.

10.♗g2 c6 11.0–0 e5 12.d5

Sooner or later White has to play this move to make progress in the centre.

12...cxd5 13.cxd5 ♘e8 14.e4 f5

Finally we have reached what appears to be a thematic King's Indian position, but Black's missing light-squared bishop is a significant long-term factor. Here is a nice example:

15.h4!?

White activates his light-squared bishop via h3.

The simple 15.♗d2 f4 16.♕e2± would also promise White the better prospects.

15...♕c4 16.h5 fxe4 17.♕d1!?

White bets on a middlegame, while 17.♕xe4 ♕xe4 18.♘xe4 gxh5 19.♗h3! was also quite promising.

17...gxh5 18.♕xh5 ♘ef6 19.♕h4 ♘c5 20.♗e3

White has a very nice position and just needs to find a suitable moment to capture on e4, Portisch – Larsen, Sousse 1967

7...e5 8.dxe5 ♗xe5 9.♘c3 ♗xc3†

This seems quite risky, but on the other hand after the natural 9...♘e7 10.♗d2 0–0 11.h4 h5 12.g3± White's chances are preferable.

10.bxc3 ♘c6 11.c5

Opening up the position is of course desirable, since White has the bishop pair.

11...dxc5

This position has occurred twice in tournament practice, and in both cases Black emerged from the opening with reasonable play. Naturally we need an improvement:



12.♖b1!N ♖b8

Black cannot develop his knight in view of 12...♘ge7 13.♕f6! 0–0 14.e4 and Black faces serious problems.

13.♖b5

The best way to regain the pawn.

13...♕d7

Another line is 13...♕e6 14.♖xc5 ♕d6 15.♖d5 and White is better.

14.♖xc5 ♘ge7 15.♗e2 0–0 16.e4

White's edge may not be big, but it will be long-lasting, thanks to his bishop pair.

8.d5 ♘f6 9.♘c3 0–0 10.g4

Certainly White could choose the modest 10.g3, but the text is interesting and more aggressive.

10...♘a6

This is Lechtynsky – Mokry, Rimavska Sobota 1990, and now I suggest the following plan:



11.♗g2!N ♘c7 12.a4!

It is better not to allow a Benko-style ...b7-b5 pawn sacrifice.

12...♘a6 13.0–0 ♘b4 14.♗d2

White is better thanks to his extra space, and the play might continue as follows:

14...a6 15.a5 ♕c7 16.♕e2 e6 17.g5 ♘d7 18.dxe6!? fxe6 19.f4±

In this complex position White's chances are preferable.

C) 3...♘f6 4.♘c3



4...c6

This is the only move order that actually forces us to play 5.e4, which I have tried hard to avoid. The alternatives are 4...♗xf3 and 4...♘bd7:

4...♗xf3 5.exf3 g6

After 5...e6 it is a good opportunity to opt for my favourite 6.g4!? (the more common 6.d5 is also quite promising). 6...♗e7 7.f4 c6 (little is changed by 7...0–0 8.♗g2 c6 9.d5! as White's chances are preferable) 8.g5 ♘fd7 9.d5 0–0 This position was reached in Cheparinov – Klinova, Metz 2005, and despite White's quick win after 10.♗d3, I believe his light-squared bishop belongs on another diagonal; after 10.♗g2 White would enjoy a pleasant edge.

6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.♗e2

Now there is a split between plans with ...c7-c6 and instead simply castling:

a) 7...c6

Probably White can transpose to a position that is covered in the 3...♗xf3 4.exf3 c6 5.♘c3 ♘d7 6.♗e2 line, by means of 8.d5 0–0 9.0–0 when I hardly believe Black has anything better than 9...♘bd7. However, once again I would like to campaign for greater aggression:

8.g4

I played this once and it turned into quite an instructive game:

8...e6

If 8...h5 then White just continues his normal development with 9.♕d2 and 0–0–0.

9.f4!?

A remarkable idea: White intends to push his pawn to f5 in order to open lines.

The thematic 9.d5 is also worthy of consideration.

9...d5 10.f5 exf5 11.gxf5 dxc4?!

Probably this is the wrong strategy, as it helps activate White's light-squared bishop.

12.♗xc4 b5 13.♗b3 b4 14.♘e2 ♘d5

This is Avrukh – Bellini, Amsterdam 2005, and now instead 15.♕d3 allowing 15...♘d7, I should have played:

15.♕c2 0–0 16.fxg6 hxg6 17.h4

The obvious plan of 18.h5 will give White a strong initiative.

b) 7...0–0



Here it will be no surprise that I like the aggressive 8.g4!?N, especially compared with 8.h4 e5 9.d5 ♘h5 10.g3 ♘d7 when

Black obtained a very reasonable game in Ligterink – Hartoch, Hilversum 1985. I have even suggested the move g2-g4 with Black's king still on e8, so I believe this is a significantly improved version for White, since with the king on g8 we have even more reasons to start advancing the kingside pawns.

4...♘bd7 5.d5!?

Again I would like to mention this rare option. Certainly White can opt for the natural 5.e4, which will probably transpose to the 4...c6-line after 5...e5 6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.♗e3 c6.

5...e5

Another option is 5...g6, but then after 6.♘d4 we already know that the light-squared bishop is misplaced on g4. Ftacnik – Jansa, Hamburg 1993, continued 6...♘c5 and now I believe White should have played 7.b4!N ♘a6 8.a3 ♗g7 9.g3 0–0 10.♗g2± with a pleasant advantage.

6.dxe6 ♗xe6

An alternative is 6...fxe6 when I believe White retains the better chances after 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.exf3 ♗e7 9.♗e2 0–0 10.0–0 c6 11.♖e1!±.

7.e4 ♗e7

If 7...♗g4 then simply 8.♗e2.

8.♘d4 0–0 9.♗e2 ♘c5 10.f3 a5 11.0–0 c6 12.♗e3

White had a big space advantage in B. Lalic – Rodriguez Aguilera, Dos Hermanas 2006.

5.e4

I was not satisfied with the results of our usual fianchetto: 5.g3 This allows the following positional idea: 5...♗xf3 6.exf3 d5! Black has good play.

Also 5.d5 is not so good in this case. The point is that Black has not played ...♘bd7, so the d7-square is free for his light-squared bishop, while the knight can develop on a6. 5...cxd5 6.cxd5 g6 7.♘d4 ♗g7 leads to a double-edged position.



5...♘bd7

Playable but somewhat passive is:

5...e6

Here I like the following set-up for White:

6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.♗e3

There is no point rushing with 8.h3, since Black will answer with 8...♗h5.

8...d5

I also examined 8...♘bd7 when the following plan looks good for White: 9.♘d2 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 d5 11.e5 ♘e8 12.f4 (the calm 12.♖ac1 is also worthy of consideration) 12...dxc4 This is Suvrajit – Koshy, Calcutta 1996, and now the natural-looking 13.♘xc4 was strong enough. The threat of f4-f5 is unpleasant and probably forces Black to play 13...b5 14.♘d2 f5 when after 15.exf6 ♘dxf6 16.♖ac1 White has a positional advantage, due to Black's badly damaged pawn structure.

9.e5 ♘fd7 10.♘d2 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 dxc4 12.♕g4 ♔h8

White was threatening 13.♗h6.

13.♘xc4 ♘b6

This is Krogius – Karasev, St Petersburg 1995, and now I like a modest move:

14.b3N ♘d5 15.♘e4

White should be better, due to his extra space, for instance:
15...♘d7 16.♖ac1 ♕c7 17.♗d2±

5...e5 6.♗e2 ♘bd7 7.0–0 ♗e7 will just transpose to 5...♘bd7.

6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♗e7

Finally we have reached a position that is similar to an Old Indian Defence, except with Black's light-squared bishop on g4. At first glance, it feels like a favourable version for Black, as the bishop is much more active on g4 than c8. Even so, my general impression is that Black can hardly hope for equal play in Indian-type positions with his dark-squared bishop passively placed on e7.

8.♗e3 0–0

The line 8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 0–0 does not have any independent value, as we can reply 10.d5 transposing to the main line, though I believe White also has reasonable alternatives. For example, I would seriously consider 10.g3.

9.d5

Obviously the critical move. It seems White can also fight for an advantage with 9.♘d2 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2, but the text is the most challenging.

This is a significant theoretical tabiya. Black now has a wide choice between which type of position he would like to play.

9...cxd5

There are two other important lines to discuss:

9...c5 10.♘e1!

This is stronger than 10.♘d2, since White's knight is transferred to d3, where it can support both the f2-f4 and b2-b4 advances.

10...♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♘e8

Black plays in the spirit of the Czech Benoni; his plan includes ...g7-g6 and ...♘g7 followed by ...f7-f5. He would also be happy to trade dark-squared bishops.

12.g3

An important prophylactic move, as now ...♗g5 can be met by f2-f4.

12...g6 13.♘d3 ♘g7

Here I like the following idea:

14.f4 exf4



15.♗xf4!N

After 15.gxf4 ♗f6 White's central pawns are rather vulnerable and Black has definite counterplay, as in the following game: 16.♗d2 ♗d4† 17.♔h1 a6 18.♖ae1 ♕h4 With a double-edged position, Smejkal – Benjamin, Thessaloniki 1988.

15...♖e8

If 15...f6 then 16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.♘f4! ♘f8 18.♖f2, followed by ♖af1, when Black's position is very passive.

16.♖ae1 ♘h5 17.♕f3

With the idea:

17...♘xf4

Or 17...f6 18.♗d2.

18.gxf4 ♗f6 19.e5!

A thematic pawn sacrifice.

19...dxe5 20.f5

White has a dangerous initiative.

9...♘e8

A thematic move for this kind of pawn structure.

10.dxc6

In my opinion the most promising continuation. Other options are less clear:

If 10.♘d2 then 10...♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♗g5 somewhat eases Black's task.

At first I preferred 10.b4, but then I failed to discover anything interesting for White after 10...♗xf3 11.♗xf3 c5! 12.a3 ♗g5 13.♕d2 ♗xe3 14.♕xe3 ♖c8 and Black was doing fine in D. Gurevich – Hickl, Groningen 1988.

10...bxc6 11.b4

This change of pawn structure appears favourable for White. In the following encounter he had definite pressure after:

11...a6 12.♘d2 ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘c7 14.a3 ♘e6 15.♘b3

And now after the inaccurate:

15...c5?!

In Geller – Matulovic, Skopje 1967, White could have secured his advantage with:



16.♘d5!N ♘d4 17.♗xd4 exd4 18.♘a5±

9...♗xf3

Even though the position is closed, I consider this trade a concession.

10.♗xf3 c5 11.g3

With the idea of slowly preparing f2-f4.

11...♘e8 12.♗g4!?

The natural 12.♗g2 also comes into consideration.

12...a6

Another example is: 12...g6 13.f4 exf4 14.gxf4 f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♗h3 ♘g7 17.♔h1 ♖f6 18.♖g1 ♖g6 19.♕d3 White had a pleasant edge in Uhlmann – Orbaan, Poland 1967.

13.♖b1 ♘ef6 14.♗h3 b5

Black consistently follows the plan he has prepared, but any opening of the position favours White:

15.cxb5 axb5 16.b4! cxb4

Not much better is 16...c4 17.♖a1! ♕b8 18.a4 bxa4 19.♖xa4±.

17.♖xb4 ♕a5 18.♕b1 ♘c5 19.♖c1 ♖fb8 20.♗f1

Black has been strategically outplayed, plus his b5-pawn is falling, Ruck – Runic, Bled 2002.

10.cxd5

Once again Black has a choice:



10...♗xf3

The alternatives are:

10...a6 11.♘d2 ♗xe2 12.♕xe2

White's d5-pawn secures a clear space advantage and it is easier for him to generate play on the queenside.

12...♘e8

Advancing the b-pawn would only ease White's task, for example: 12...b5 13.♖fc1 b4 14.♘d1 ♘e8 15.a3 bxa3 16.♖xa3± Black faced serious difficulties in Li Wenliang – Reh, Bad Zwesten 2003.

13.b4

White starts his play on the queenside, not worrying about a possible trade of dark-squared bishops.

13...g6

After 13...♗g5 White can continue with 14.♗xg5 ♕xg5 15.♘c4.

14.♘c4 ♗g5 15.♗xg5 ♕xg5 16.♖ac1 ♕e7 17.♘a5 ♖b8

This position arose in Blagojevic – Guzijan, Niksic 1996, and now I found an improvement:

18.♕e3!?N f5 19.♕a7 ♘c7 20.f3 ♘f6 21.a4±

Maybe there is still nothing concrete, but White has achieved more on the queenside and has the better prospects.

10...♘e8 Now I like the following idea: 11.♕b3 ♕b8 12.♖fc1 ♘c5 13.♕c2 f5 Black's last two moves were simply wrong and now White achieves a solid plus with a simple idea: 14.♗xc5! dxc5 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♗d3 ♗xd3 17.♕xd3± White has a clear positional advantage, Marin – Khasin, Dresden 1988.

11.♗xf3 ♕b8

Now Black's main positional idea is to trade dark-squared bishops with ...♗d8-b6, which is why White's next couple of moves are logical.

12.a4 ♖c8 13.a5 ♗d8

Now I found the following example quite instructive:

14.♗e2 b5 15.f3!

The best reaction; White carries out a fine regrouping.

15...a6 16.♖f2 ♕b7 17.♗f1 h6 18.g3 ♗c7

This is Gelfand – Campora, Izmir 2004. Black's idea is to transfer his dark-squared bishop to a7 with ...♗b8-a7, but White has a strong positional idea at his disposal:



19.♕e1!N ♗b8 20.♘a2! ♗a7 21.♘b4

The knight is ready to jump to c6. White can also create more pressure on the queenside with ♗h3, and then start playing along the c-file. His advantage is obvious.

D) 3...♗xf3 4.exf3

I always prefer to recapture with the e-pawn, but of course 4.gxf3 is a worthy alternative that leads to more closed positions.



There is now a split between **D1) 4...g6** and **D2) 4...c6**.

4...e6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 will be examined via 3...♘f6, and 4...♘f6 5.♘c3 will also transpose to 3...♘f6.

D1) 4...g6 5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 e6

Other options, such as 6...♘d7 or 6...♘f6, are examined via different move orders.

7.♕b3

A tempting continuation that attacks the b7-pawn and thus White gains a tempo to castle long. Instead Black has a reasonable game after both 7.♕d2 ♘e7 8.h4 d5! and 7.h4 ♘e7 8.h5 ♘f5, as in this case Black keeps the option of castling long.



7...♘e7

The critical move. Perhaps White is not really threatening to capture on b7 at once, but it should always be considered.

Black sometimes chooses to defend against the alleged threat to b7:

a) 7...b6

Now I like immediate aggression:

8.h4!?N

White has tried only 8.d5 and 8.♗e2, but neither move is in the spirit of the position.

8...♘e7

I also examined 8...h5 9.0–0–0 ♘h6 (9...♘e7 10.g4 just transposes to 8...♘e7) 10.♗g5 ♕c8 11.♗d3 and White has a comfortable edge.

9.g4 h5 10.0–0–0

White's position looks very promising, for instance:

10...♘bc6 11.d5 ♘a5 12.♕c2±

It is hard to imagine where Black's king will hide.

b) 7...♕c8

This looks too passive, and the following example illustrates White's resources.

8.h4 h5



9.d5!

This is very strong, especially with the black queen stuck on c8.

9...exd5

The main point is that 9...e5 runs into 10.c5! which underlines how badly placed the black queen is.

The best try was 9...♘e7, although after 10.dxe6 fxe6 11.0–0–0 ♘bc6 12.g4! White has clearly better prospects.

10.♘xd5! ♘d7

Black cannot play 10...c6 in view of 11.♘c3 ♘e7 12.♘e4! and Black loses the d6-pawn.

11.0–0–0 ♔f8

The line 11...♘gf6 12.♗d4 ♔f8 13.♘e3± does not change much.

12.g4±

White's superiority was undeniable in Pogorelov – Panchenko, Katowice 1992.

8.0–0–0

Grabbing the b7-pawn would allow Black excellent counterplay: 8.♕xb7 ♘bc6

9.0–0–0 ♖b8 10.♕a6 0–0 Black definitely has compensation.

8...0–0 9.h4 ♘bc6 10.d5

Not allowing Black to build pressure against the d4-pawn with ...♘f5.

10...♘a5

This is Peek – Hartoch, Edinburgh 1988, and now a possible improvement is:



11.♕a3!?N

The game continued 11.♕a4 when ...♗xc3 may be a useful resource at some point.

11...b6

Black cannot play 11...c5 in view of 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.♗xc5.

12.dxe6

Also quite promising is 12.h5 ♕d7 13.g4.

12...fxe6 13.h5 ♘f5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♘e4

White is clearly better, due to Black's vulnerable kingside.

D2) 4...c6 5.♘c3 ♘d7

Black has three interesting alternatives:

5...g6 6.♗e3 ♘d7 7.♕d2

Now I checked what happens if Black delays playing ...♗g7.

7...♘gf6

Instead 7...♗g7 8.♗e2 ♘gf6 9.g4 would transpose to the 3...♘d7 4.c4 ♗xf3 5.exf3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.♕d2 c6 8.♗e2 line, which is variation E1 on page 515.

8.g4!

White's play in the following game looks very powerful.

8...♘b6 9.h4 d5 10.c5 ♘bd7

Another option is 10...♘c4 11.♗xc4 dxc4 12.♕e2! when Black fails to obtain sufficient compensation for the pawn.

11.h5 ♖g8 12.0–0–0 b6

This extremely complex position arose in Ilincic – Pikula, Yugoslavia (ch) 2002, and now White should have played:



13.cxb6N

This move, and the following variation, was suggested by Ilincic in *Informant 84*.

13...axb6 14.♔b1

Black stands well positionally, with one minor exception – his king is in trouble. This is why I believe White's chances are better. For example:

14...e6 15.♖c1 ♗b4 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♕c2 b5 18.♘e2 ♖a6 19.♘f4!±

Followed by ♘d3.

5...♘f6

With this move order Black can sometimes

try to play a quick ...d6-d5 and then develop his dark-squared bishop on the f8-a3 diagonal. So it makes sense that White's usual choice here is 6.d5, but instead I recommend my favourite thrust:

6.g4!?

This has been played only once, and that was by me! The position is very interesting and complicated, and in the following encounter my innovation worked perfectly:

6...e6 7.g5 ♘fd7 8.d5!

Certainly White has no intention of allowing Black to play ...d6-d5.

8...cxd5 9.cxd5 e5 10.f4

White has the two bishops, so he tries to open up the play.

10...♗e7

When annotating this game in *ChessBase Magazine* 96, Meulders suggested 10...exf4 11.♗xf4 ♗e7 as the right way to equalize. I disagree with this evaluation, as I do not see any big difference from the game. After 12.h4 0–0 13.♗e2 if 13...♘e5 then 14.♗e3 followed by 15.f4 is good. White keeps his usual space advantage.

11.fxe5 ♘xe5 12.f4 ♘ed7

This was Avrukh – Sanduleac, Istanbul 2003, and now I should have played the natural:

13.♗e3 0–0 14.♗e2 ♘a6 15.0–0±

White would have a comfortable space advantage.

5...e6?!

A dubious move that allows a powerful reply:

6.d5! exd5 7.cxd5

White activates his light-squared bishop and his lead in development starts to tell. Black will experience serious problems whichever way he replies:

7...♘f6

After 7...c5 8.♗b5† ♘d7 9.0–0 a6 10.♗xd7† ♕xd7 Black receives an unpleasant surprise: 11.b4! cxb4 12.♘a4 ♕b5 13.♗e3 ♘f6 14.♘b6 ♖b8 15.a4! ♕a5 16.♖e1 ♗e7 17.♗d4+– White was winning easily in S. Atalik – Negulescu, Romania 2003.

8.♗e2 ♘bd7 9.0–0 ♘b6 10.dxc6 bxc6 11.♗a6! ♕d7

White was threatening 12.♗b7.

12.♘e4! ♘fd5

This is too much; Black should have preferred the modest 12...♘xe4 13.fxe4 ♗e7, though after 14.♕c2 0–0 15.♗e3 White is better due to his bishop pair and Black's weak central pawns.

13.♕d4 ♘c7 14.♖e1 ♘e6 15.♘g5+–

Black was unable to hold back White's offensive in Iljin – Mishin, St Petersburg 2005.

6.♗e2 g6 7.0–0 ♗g7 8.♗e3 ♘gf6

This is a rather solid set-up for Black. White is still better, despite having selected a less aggressive set-up with short castling.

Black should not get extravagant with 8...♘h6:



This was tried in Polak – Votava, Olomouc 1997, and by now the reader might guess my recommendation:

9.g4!?N

Not just raw aggression; there is also a healthy positional idea of restricting the black knight. The next sequence looks close to forced:

9...f5 10.♕d2 ♘f7 11.gxf5 gxf5 12.♔h1!

I think opening the g-file is clearly in White's favour, as now castling short would be dangerous for Black, while castling long is barely possible. For example:

12...♕a5

Somewhat better is 12...♘f8 13.♖g1 ♘g6, but even here after 14.f4, with the idea of ♗h5, White has the advantage.

13.♖g1 ♗f6 14.♖ab1!

It is hard to imagine Black castling long here, since after b4-b5 his king would not survive for long.

9.d5 0–0 10.♕b3!

A key move that disrupts Black's normal development.



10...cxd5

Perhaps objectively this is not the strongest continuation, but it is a very important move to study. The other possibilities are 10...♕c7 and 10...♕b8:

10...♕c7 11.♖fd1 a6 12.♖ac1

White quickly exploits the slightly misplaced black queen.

12...♖fc8

We have followed the game Kharitonov – Agrest, Pinsk 1993, and now is the right moment to improve on White's play:



13.g4!?N

Our thematic move for this line, but usually White plays this as part of a plan involving castling long and attacking on the kingside. However, in this case it is a useful move from a positional point of view. White has two ideas. The first is to chase away Black's knight from f6 with g4-g5, when White's bishop might jump to g4. The second is to support the advance of the f-pawn to f5.

In the game 13.f4 was played, when Black had a good chance: 13...cxd5N 14.cxd5 ♘c5 15.♕a3 ♕d7! (with the idea of playing ...♘g4) 16.h3 ♘fe4 The simplifications will favour Black.

13...cxd5 14.cxd5 ♘c5

Vacating the d7-square for the other knight.

15.♕a3 a5

A sad necessity, as White was threatening b2-b4 at some point.

16.♔g2

White has no reason to hurry, so he simply makes a useful move.

Premature would have been 16.g5 ♘h5! 17.f4 ♕d7. The queen is heading to f5; Black has counterplay.

16...♘fd7 17.f4!±

There is no immediate danger for Black, but he suffers from the lack of a concrete plan, while White can push his kingside pawns, which will create targets near the black king. For example, if Black tries:

17...♕b6

With the idea of heading to b4, but White has an easy solution:

18.♘b5

10...♕b8 11.♖fd1 ♖c8 12.♖ac1 a6

I admit I am in love with the idea of pushing White's g-pawn. Once again, I think that after all the natural moves have been played, it is the right time to squeeze Black on the kingside.

13.g4!?N

The text move looks right, especially when we consider that Black should have had reasonable play in the following encounter: 13.♖d2 cxd5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♖xd5 This is Gelfand – Ivanchuk, Belgrade 1997, and now I do not see why White is better after: 15...♘c5 16.♕b4 (if 16.♕a3 then all Black's pieces on the queenside start to work after 16...b5 17.b4 ♘a4 18.♖d2 a5! and White must be careful) 16...a5 17.♕a3 ♕c7 And it seems to me Black has a very sound position. After my novelty I analysed the following variation:

13...♘c5

Obviously Black cannot start with 13...cxd5, since this runs into the very annoying 14.g5! and White will recapture with his knight on d5.

14.♕c2

Less clear is 14.♕a3 a5 15.g5 ♘fd7 16.f4 ♕c7 followed by ...♕b6-b4.

14...a5

And now White has two plausible lines:

15.g5

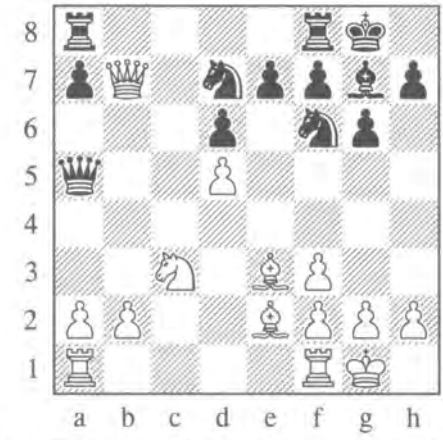
A serious alternative is: 15.f4 ♘fd7 16.♗f3 ♘b6 (or 16...a4 17.♖e1 ♘b6 18.♕e2±) 17.♕e2 cxd5 18.cxd5 ♘ba4 19.♘xa4 ♘xa4 20.♕b5 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 ♘c5 22.♔g2± White has a pleasant advantage.

15...♘fd7 16.f4 a4 17.h4 ♕c7 18.h5

White has a good initiative on the kingside, and he is also pretty much in control on the other side of the board.

11.cxd5 ♕a5 12.♕xb7

Obviously this is the critical continuation.



12...♖fb8 13.♕c6 ♘e5 14.♕a6 ♕xa6 15.♗xa6 ♖xb2 16.♖ab1

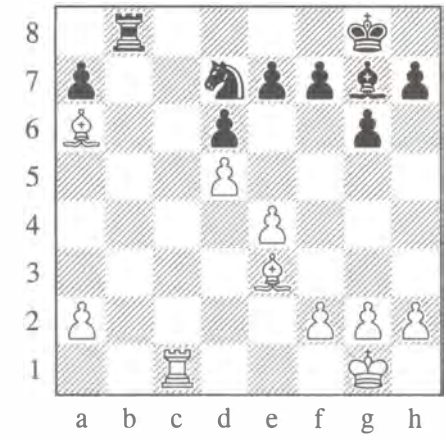
Up to this point everything was more or less forced, but now Black has a choice.

16...♖c2

The other option was 16...♖ab8 but now the strong 17.f4! would promise White a serious advantage, thanks to the line 17...♘ed7 18.♗xa7 ♖xb1 19.♖xb1 ♖xb1† 20.♘xb1 ♘xd5 21.a4 and the a-pawn should decide the game.

17.♖fc1! ♖xc1† 18.♖xc1 ♘ed7 19.♘e4 ♘xe4 20.fxe4 ♖b8

This is Schroer – Vovsha, Internet 2009, and now White should play:



21.♖c7N ♘c5 22.♗xc5 dxc5 23.♖xe7

Black's position is very difficult.

E) 3...♘d7 4.♘c3



The split now is between **E1) 4...♗xf3** and **E2) 4...e5**.

Instead 4...♘gf6 5.e4 will in most cases lead to the position 5...e5 6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.♗e3 c6, which was examined in the 3...♘f6-line.

E1) 4...♗xf3 5.exf3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7

We have a similar type of position as we examined after 3...♗xf3.

7.♕d2

I like this aggressive approach. Also possible is 7.♗e2, but here Black can try to save a tempo by avoiding ...c7-c6, with 7...♘gf6 8.0–0 0–0.

7...c6

I also examined a few other options for Black:

7...e6 8.g4

I came to the conclusion that this is more accurate than 8.h4, when after 8...h5 9.♗e2 ♘e7 10.g4 c6 11.0–0–0 d5 Black had a good game in N. Berry – Wells, Edinburgh 2002.

8...♘e7 9.h4 d5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5

Worse is 10...exd5 11.h5±.

11.♘xd5 exd5 12.0–0–0 0–0 13.h5

White keeps the initiative, as was proven in S. Savchenko – Belikov, Ukraine 1997:

13...♖e8 14.♔b1 ♖c8 15.f4 ♘f6 16.f3±

7...♘gf6 8.g4 c5 9.d5

Worthy of consideration is 9.h4!? cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♘e5 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.♗e3, though Black is pretty much in the game after 12...♕a5 13.h5 ♘d7.

9...♕a5 10.h4 ♘b6



11.♘b5!?

An interesting decision. The position after a queen exchange appears to favour White, thanks to his space advantage and the bishop pair.

11...♕xd2† 12.♔xd2 0–0 13.a4! a5?!

A positionally dubious decision, but in any case White was a little better, for instance: 13...a6 14.♘c3 ♘e8 15.h5 ♘c7 16.♖a3!±

14.♔c2 ♘bd7 15.h5 ♖ad8 16.♗e2±

White had an obvious positional advantage in Pogorelov – Argandona Riveiro, San Sebastian 2005.

8.♗e2 ♘gf6 9.g4

Once again this is the critical line; I was the first to employ this continuation. Instead, the position after 9.d5 0–0 10.0–0 cxd5 11.cxd5 seems playable for Black, as his pieces are placed harmoniously.

9...h6 10.h4 d5

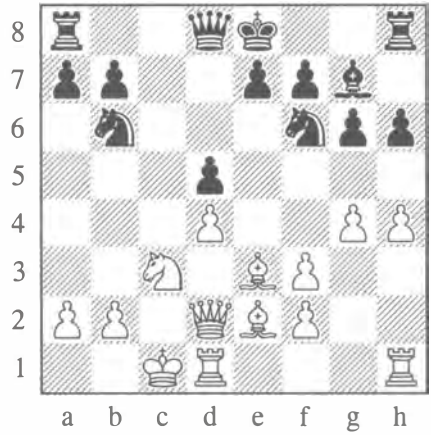
Naturally Black wants to stabilize his position in the centre, since castling short is no longer possible.

11.cxd5 cxd5

Black is also far from solving his problems after the other recapture: 11...♘xd5 12.♘xd5 cxd5 And now either 13.0–0–0 or 13.h5 g5 14.f4 gxf4 15.♗xf4. In either case White is better.

12.0–0–0 ♘b6

This position was reached in Avrukh – Vovsha, Biel 2002, and now I should have continued with:



13.h5!N

Then after 13...gxh5 14.gxh5 or 13...g5 14.f4 gxf4 15.♗xf4, Black's king has significant problems.

E2) 4...e5

This is an important tabiya. The text move has been used by such strong players as Adams, Bacrot, Beliavsky and Timman.

5.g3

This is White's main choice according to theory. Now Black has a choice between two different types of position; the first line keeps the same structure we have now, and the second changes the structure by capturing on f3.



Thus our lines are **E21) 5...♘gf6** and **E22) 5...♗xf3**.

E21) 5...♘gf6 6.♗g2 c6

Black can also start with 5...c6 followed by ...♘gf6, which would eventually lead to the same position.

7.0–0 ♗e7 8.h3

Again Black is at a crossroads.



8...♗h5

The alternative was of course to take:

8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 0–0

This leads to a sound but pretty passive position for Black. I have never believed Black can hope for full equality after giving up his light-squared bishop.

10.♗g2 ♕b6

Another practical example continued: 10...♖e8 11.d5 ♖c8 12.b3 a6 13.♗d2 cxd5?! It was obviously better not to open up the h1-a8 diagonal. In the following game Black tried not to close the position, but it did not work out very well: 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♗xd5 ♕c7 16.♖c1 ♘f6 17.♗g2 White obtained a comfortable edge in Heim – Zupe, Slough 1997.

11.d5 c5 12.e4 ♘e8

This position is from Stohl – Ruck, Opatija 1995, and now I believe White should have continued with the natural:



13.♖b1±N

White will combine the two thematic plans of b2-b4 and f2-f4. These pawn breaks, together with the bishop pair, promise him better long-term prospects.

9.♘h4!

The best way of fighting for an advantage; the knight is heading for f5 and Black has to decide which bishop he will give up for White's knight.

9...0–0

Another option is:

9...♗g6

But now White has a strong idea:

10.e3 0–0

Black has also tried 10...♘h5 when White replies 11.♘xg6 hxg6 12.b4. White intends to seize the initiative on the queenside with the help of his light-squared bishop. 12...f5 With the natural idea of blocking White's light-squared bishop with ...e5-e4. 13.b5 e4 14.bxc6 bxc6 15.♘xe4!? An interesting piece sacrifice. (But maybe objectively stronger would have been 15.g4 ♘hf6 16.f3, since after 16...d5 White has a very strong idea: 17.cxd5 ♘xd5 18.♘xe4! fxe4 19.fxe4 ♘5b6 20.e5 With a powerful initiative.) 15...fxe4 16.♗xe4 ♘hf6 17.♗xg6† ♔f8 This was played in Plaskett – Dunworth, Dundee 1991, and now I like 18.♕f3N with the idea of 18...♖xh3 19.e4 ♔g8 20.♕f5! and after 20...♘f8 21.♕xh3 ♘xg6 22.♕e6† ♔f8 23.♖b1± White has a clear advantage.

11.f4

Black's reply is forced.

11...♘h5 12.♘xg6 hxg6 13.g4 ♘hf6

In Krasenkow – Lauk, Lubniewice 1994, I found the following improvement:

14.g5N ♘e8 15.h4 ♘c7 16.d5!

White has a pleasant space advantage.

10.♘f5



10...♖e8

Some games have continued 10...♗g6, but after 11.♘xe7† ♕xe7 12.e4 White has a comfortable advantage, mainly due to Black's misplaced bishop and White's extra space. The game Nikolaidis – Galego, Panormo 2001, continued 12...♖fe8 13.♖e1. And here Black unsuccessfully tried to change the character of the position with 13...exd4 14.♕xd4 d5?! 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♗g5! dxe4 and now the simple 17.♘xe4N would secure White a large advantage.

11.♘xe7†

From a positional point of view I like the idea of playing against Black's light-squared bishop, but at the same time the popular 11.d5 is also good enough. For example, 11...c5 12.♕b3 ♘b6 13.e4 ♗g6 14.♘e3± and White had an edge in Sasikiran – Torre, Bled (ol) 2002.

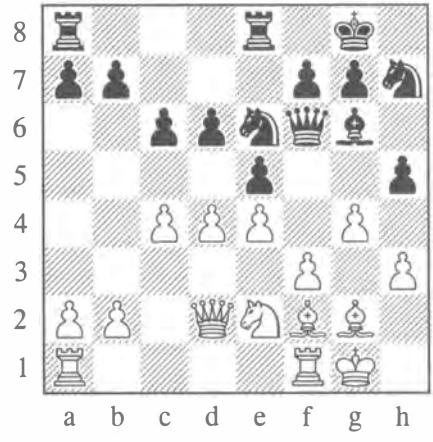
11...♕xe7 12.g4 ♗g6 13.e4

In the only game to reach this position Black tried to create some play on the kingside, but he did not succeed.

13...h5 14.f3 ♘f8 15.♗e3

White continues his normal development.

15...♘6h7 16.♕d2 ♕h4 17.♘e2 ♘e6 18.♗f2 ♕f6



19.d5! cxd5 20.cxd5 ♘ef8

Black recognizes his failure; now White has easy play on the queenside.

21.♖ac1 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♕d8 23.♖c4 ♘f6 24.♖fc1±

White's advantage was obvious in J. Alvarez – Galego, Cuba 1997.

E22) 5...♗xf3 6.exf3



6...exd4

This is Black's main move according to theory, but I consider it slightly inaccurate, as it allows White an extra option on the 8th move (as we shall see below, 6...♘gf6 7.♗g2 exd4 should be Black's choice if he wants to play as in our main line).

Clearly inferior is:

6...♗e7 7.dxe5! ♘xe5

If 7...dxe5 then 8.f4 and opening up the play is clearly in White's favour, thanks to his bishop pair.

8.f4 ♘d7 9.♗g2 c6 10.g4!?

Preventing Black's normal development, as White is ready to meet 10...♘gf6 with 11.g5.

10...♘b6 11.♕e2 ♘f6 12.g5 ♘fd7 13.♗e3

Followed by castling long; White had a nice edge in I. Sokolov – Hickl, Jakarta 1996.

Too slow is:

6...g6

Here I like the aggressive approach:

7.f4 exf4

After 7...exd4 8.♕xd4 ♘gf6 9.♗g2 Black has serious problems completing his development, as the following example shows: 9...♘c5 10.0–0 ♗g7 11.♖e1† ♔f8 12.♕d2! a5 13.♕c2 ♖b8 14.h3 h6 15.♗e3 ♘fd7 16.♖ad1 White had a huge advantage in Plischki – Verkasalo, Prague 2008.

8.♗xf4 ♗h6 9.♗xh6 ♘xh6 10.♕d2 ♘f5 11.♗h3 ♘g7

The key point is that Black cannot play 11...0–0 12.♗xf5 ♖e8†, since after 13.♗e4! f5 14.0–0 fxe4 15.♖ae1 Black cannot hold his central pawn: 15...♘f6 16.♕c2 ♕e7 17.♘xe4! ♘xe4 18.f3±

12.♕e3† ♔f8

Also 12...♕e7 13.0–0! ♕xe3 14.fxe3 f5 15.e4 0–0 16.exf5 ♘xf5 17.♘b5! does not bring Black relief either.

13.0–0 ♘f6 14.♕f3 ♖b8 15.♖fe1±

White had a clear advantage in Dizdar – Hickl, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

6...♘gf6 7.♗g2 ♗e7

7...c6 8.0–0 ♗e7 9.f4 will eventually transpose to 7...♗e7.

The key line is 7...exd4, as I think this is the right move order if Black wants to play our main line with 6...exd4.

8.0–0 0–0 9.f4 c6

Here I like the following plan:

10.fxe5 dxe5 11.d5 ♕c7

This position has been reached in two games, and now I suggest a natural novelty:

12.♗e3N ♖fd8

Black should avoid 12...♗c5 as White rolls forward with tempo after 13.♗xc5 ♘xc5 14.b4 ♘cd7 15.c5±.

13.♖c1±

The strong d-pawn, with the support of the bishops, secures White a comfortable edge.

7.♕xd4 ♘gf6 8.♗g2

With the move order Black has used, White has a very interesting alternative at his disposal: 8.g4!? ♘c5 (Other moves are hardly sufficient for Black: 8...♗e7 9.g5 ♘e5 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.♕h4 ♘d7 12.♗e3±, or 8...h6 9.♗e3 g6 10.0–0–0 ♗g7 11.♗e2 0–0 12.♕d2 ♔h7 13.h4 with an initiative.) 9.♗e3 ♗e7 10.g5 ♘e6 11.♕d2 ♘d7 12.f4 c6 13.0–0–0 ♕a5 14.♔b1 ♘b6 15.♗d3± White reached a very promising position in Komarov – Klinova, Valle d'Aosta 2002.

8...♗e7 9.0–0 0–0



10.♗e3

I believe this is White's best set-up in this line.

10...♖e8 11.f4 c6

We have reached a typical position for this variation. White has a space advantage and his plan includes advancing his kingside pawns after first consolidating his position in the centre. This should win White even more space and push back Black's minor pieces.

12.h3

It is essential to take control of the g4-square, while at the same time preparing the g3-g4 advance.

12...a5 13.b3

It is useful to prevent a possible ...a5-a4, which would gain Black more space on the queenside.

13...♘c5 14.♖ab1

This move is a bit slow, but this is not a big problem as it does not change the character of the position.

14...♗f8 15.g4 g6 16.♖bd1

Now in the game Vyzmanavin – Mokry, Tilburg 1994, Black dubiously sacrificed a pawn with:

16...♗g7?!

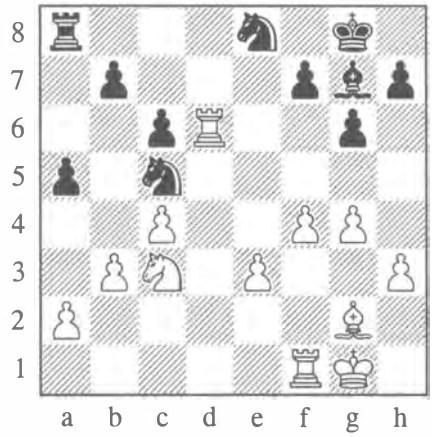
Black should instead have played the natural 16...♘fd7. In this case after 17.♘e2 ♕b6 (or 17...♕f6 18.♘g3 ♕xd4 19.♖xd4±) 18.♕d2 ♕b4 19.♘g3± White would retain slightly the better chances. His main idea is to play f4-f5 and fire up the action on the kingside.

After the text move there was nothing wrong with taking the pawn:

17.♕xd6N

Since the following idea does not work for Black.

17...♕xd6 18.♖xd6 ♖xe3 19.fxe3 ♘e8



20.♖d4! ♘e6 21.♘e2 ♘xd4 22.exd4±

White has a healthy extra pawn.

Conclusion:

The Wade Defence usually leads to interesting unbalanced play. White should keep an edge, with his extra space or bishop pair being two common sources of this advantage. The attentive reader will have noted my fondness for the advance g2-g4, sometimes as an attack, other times as a purely positional space-grab.



Modern Defence



Modern Defence

Variation Index

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 g6

3.c4 ♗g7 4.g3

A) 4...♘c6 522
B) 4...c5 5.d5 b5 6.cxb5 522
B1) 6...a6 522
B2) 6...♕a5† 524
C) 4...e5 5.♘c3 524
C1) 5...♗g4 525
C2) 5...♘c6 526
C3) 5...exd4 528
C4) 5...♘d7 6.♗g2 530
C41) 6...♘h6 530
C42) 6...♘e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.e4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘de2 531
C421) 10...♘de5 534
C422) 10...♘c5 535
C423) 10...a5 535

A) after 16...♗h3



17.♕f4!N

C2) note to 6...♘xe5



14.♖xd7!N

C423) after 12...f5



13.♘f4!?N

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 g6

The Modern Defence requires careful treatment from White, because of the many transpositional possibilities. Naturally the King's Indian is lurking in the background.

3.c4

At first my intention was to recommend the immediate 3.g3, but then I discovered that 3...♗g7 4.♗g2 c5!? lures us into unfamiliar territory.

3...♗g7 4.g3

Instead 4.♘c3 ♗g4 is not a bad system for Black, so it seems wise to avoid this variation.

Now we must consider three main lines: **A) 4...♘c6**, **B) 4...c5** and **C) 4...e5**.

Instead 4...♘d7 5.♘c3 e5 just transposes to the 4...e5 line. And of course 4...♘f6 would lead to a normal King's Indian.

A) 4...♘c6

I recommend avoiding the main theory of 5.♗g2 e5 or 5.♘c3 ♗g4 and instead opt for:

5.d5 ♘e5

5...♘b8 looks too artificial, and after 6.♗g2 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.0–0 we reach a very favourable version of the King's Indian.

6.♘xe5 ♗xe5 7.♗g2

Now in order to develop his kingside knight Black needs to waste a tempo:

7...♗g7 8.0–0 ♘f6 9.♘c3 0–0

I believe White should avoid playing 10.e4, as the following line seems much more to the point:

10.♗e3

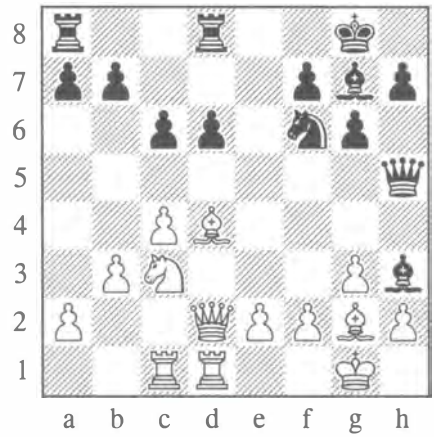
The only game to reach this position continued:

10...e5 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.b3 c6 13.♖c1

White has easier play in this pawn structure, with the following game a good thematic example:

13...♕a5 14.♕d2 ♖fd8 15.♖fd1 ♕h5 16.♗d4 ♗h3

This is Burgess – Anand, Prestwich 1990, and now White missed a strong manoeuvre:



17.♕f4!N ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 ♘e8 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♖d3

White has good pressure on Black's weak d6-pawn.

B) 4...c5 5.d5

In the next few moves the play should transpose to either the Benoni or the Benko Gambit. However, I also analysed some rare ideas after the following pawn sacrifice:

5...b5 6.cxb5

The split now is between **B1) 6...a6** and **B2) 6...♕a5†**.

B1) 6...a6 7.bxa6

White is willing to transpose to the Benko Gambit.

7...♘f6 8.♘c3 0–0 9.♗g2

Now of course 9...♗xa6 transposes to the Benko, but Black can vary:

9...♘xa6

Another method of carrying out a similar idea is:

9...♗f5

This idea was mentioned by Kasimdzhanov in his DVD on the King's Indian, to which opening this position might transpose, so this could be important in practice.

10.♘d2

This is White's best continuation. If instead 10.0–0 then Black carries out his main idea: 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.♘d2 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♖xa6⩲ With interesting play for Black.

10...♘xa6

10...♕c8 is too artificial: 11.♘c4 ♕xa6 After 12.♘e3 ♗c8 as in Drasko – Ristic, Ulcinj 1997, White should have played the simple 13.0–0 ♘bd7 14.♕c2± with a good version of a thematic Benko position.



11.♘c4!N

An important novelty that obviously improves upon 11.0–0 ♘b4 12.♘c4 ♗c2 13.♕d2 ♗b3! when Black has good play.

11...♘b4 12.e4 ♗g4

It makes little difference to the assessment if Black tries 12...♗c8 13.a3 ♗a6 14.♗f1. 13.f3 ♗c8 14.a3 ♗a6 15.♗f1 ♗xc4 16.♗xc4 ♘d7 17.♗e3 ♘a6 18.0–0 ♕a5 19.♕d2±

White manages to consolidate and Black can hardly hope for full compensation without his light-squared bishop.

10.0–0

Here 10.♘d2 does not achieve its goal, since after 10...♘c7 11.0–0 ♗a6 Black has very nice play for the pawn, as White's pieces lack coordination.



10...♗f5

Otherwise there is no point in 9...♘xa6.

11.♘h4

I think this is the most promising line for White.

11...♗d7 12.♗d2

Now the following continuation is quite natural:

12...♕a5 13.♕c1!?

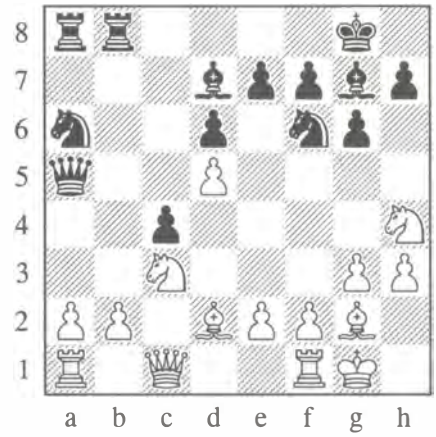
As we already know from the main line, this is not such a bad square for the white queen, especially when we take into account that 13.♕c2 would run into ...♘b4.

13...♖fb8 14.h3

This is always a useful move in this kind of position.

14...c4

This position was reached in Sargissian – Kurnosov, Plovdiv 2008, and now White should have played:



15.♗e3!N

Keeping control of the d4-square; let's see a typical continuation:

15...♘e8 16.♘f3

It is very important that the thematic tactical idea 16...♖xb2?! 17.♕xb2 ♗xc3 does not work in view of 18.♕b7± when White keeps an extra pawn.

B2) 6...♕a5† 7.♘c3!

Not so clear is 7.♗d2 ♕xb5 8.♘c3 ♕b6 and Black has a half-decent version of the Benko.



7...♘f6

Obviously dangerous is 7...♗xc3† 8.bxc3 ♕xc3† 9.♗d2 as the absence of the dark-squared bishop should tell eventually.

7...♗d7 looks ridiculous and White played strongly in the following encounter: 8.♗d2 (8.e4!?) 8...♗xb5 9.♘xb5 ♕xb5 10.e4 ♕b7 (10...♕xb2 would of course be dangerous for Black: 11.♖b1 ♕xa2 12.♗b5† ♔f8 13.0–0 White has the initiative) 11.♕a4†! ♔f8 (11...♘d7 12.♗b5 does not bring Black relief either) 12.♗h3!? ♕a6 13.♕c2 ♘f6 14.♗f1 ♕c8 15.♗e2 h6 16.0–0 With the black king on f8, White's advantage is undeniable, Khamzin – Singh, New Delhi 2009.

8.♗d2 a6 9.bxa6 0–0 10.♗g2 ♗xa6 11.0–0 ♘bd7 12.♖b1

We have finally transposed to a position from the main line of the Benko Gambit, which is covered on page 214.

C) 4...e5 5.♘c3

We have reached a major crossroads for Black. He has a wide choice in this position, with four main lines and even a couple of minor variations:



The key lines are **C1) 5...♗g4**, **C2) 5...♘c6**, **C3) 5...exd4** and **C4) 5...♘d7**.

We will also mention and dismiss 5...♘e7 and 5...f5:

5...♘e7

I do not see how Black can profit from this move order, and it also allows White an additional option:

6.dxe5!?

There is nothing wrong with 6.♗g2.

6...dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♗g2

Usually this type of endgame is defendable for Black, but here there is one small detail that makes Black's life tougher: normally Black develops his kingside knight via h6 to f7, where it controls the important d6-square and allows Black to slowly complete his development. But in this case it is obviously misplaced on e7, so White has good chances of gaining an advantage.

8...f6 9.0–0 c6

This position was reached in Rinder – Weise, Solingen 1964, and now I found a strong idea:



10.b3!N

This is quite problematic for Black, for instance:

10...♔c7 11.♗a3 ♖e8 12.♘e4 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♗d6† ♔c8 15.exf3 ♘f5 16.f4

White has the initiative.

5...f5?!

This is one of Black's weakest legal moves!

6.dxe5! dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♗g5†

White gains far too many tempos for his development.

8...♔e8 9.0–0–0 ♘e7?

This is just a blunder.

Black should have opted for 9...♗d7, although even here after 10.e4 h6 11.♗e3 ♘e7 12.exf5! gxf5 13.♘h4!± he is under serious pressure due to his weak king, which is stuck in the centre and has lost the right to castle.

10.♗xe7! ♔xe7 11.♘d5† ♔d6 12.♘b6†

White was winning in Tadic – Borsos, Senta 2002.

C1) 5...♗g4

This mixture of a kingside fianchetto, ...e7-e5 and ...♗g4 does not work well for Black.

6.dxe5



6...♗xf3

The simple pawn recapture walks into trouble: 6...dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8 8.♘g5! ♘h6 9.♗g2 c6 (Not much better is: 9...♔c8 10.0–0 ♘c6 11.h3 ♗d7 12.♘ge4 Heading for c5 at an appropriate moment. 12...f5 13.♘c5 e4 14.♖d1 ♘e5 15.♗f4 ♘hf7 16.♘d5± White seized a decisive initiative in Adorjan – Kupreichik, Jyvaskyla 1991.) This is Ribli – Matulovic, Vrbas 1977, and now White should continue

with: 10.b4!N f6 11.♘ge4 ♘f7 12.b5 With a strong initiative on the queenside.

7.exf3 ♗xe5 8.♕b3

A tempting continuation, but it is also worth considering 8.♗h3!?N with the following possible line: 8...♗g7 (if Black moves his knight from g8, White has the annoying 9.♗h6) 9.0–0 ♘e7 10.♗g5 0–0 11.♖e1 ♘bc6 12.♘d5 White's position plays itself. 12...f6 13.♗d2± Black's set-up is very suspicious from a positional point of view.

8...♕c8 9.f4 ♗g7 10.♗g2 ♘c6 11.0–0 ♘ge7 12.♘d5!

Not allowing Black to complete his development in a natural way.

12...♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘b8 14.♖e1† ♔f8 15.♗h3±

Black faced serious problems in Van Wely – Hommeles, Netherlands 1997.

C2) 5...♘c6 6.dxe5!

This looks more convincing than 6.d5 ♘ce7.



6...♘xe5

The pawn recapture is simply inferior:

6...dxe5? 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8

Black loses material after 7...♘xd8 8.♘b5 ♘e6 9.♘g5! and the c7-pawn is dropping, T.R. Hansen – Flaata, Norway 2000.

8.♗g5†!

Black is in serious trouble.

8...♘ce7

The other options do not help either:

8...f6 9.0–0–0† ♔e8 (or 9...♗d7 10.♗h3!+–) 10.♘d5 The c7-pawn cannot be saved. 10...♔f7 11.♘xc7 ♖b8 12.♗d2 ♘ge7 13.♗c3 e4 14.♘d4 White was simply a pawn up in Comas Fabrego – Sanpera Bonet, Castellar 2004.

8...♘ge7 9.0–0–0† ♗d7 This is Jasnikowski – Szopka, Lublin 1988, and now the simple 10.♘d5 would be decisive, since Black is helpless against the threats of 11.♘f6 or 11.♗f6.

9.0–0–0† ♗d7 10.♗h3 f5

This is the best Black can do in this dubious line, but still after:

11.e4!

Black's position is extremely dangerous, for instance:

11...♔c8 12.♖he1 ♘c6 13.exf5 gxf5

In Milos – Fulgenzi, Buenos Aires 1991, a simple tactic was possible:



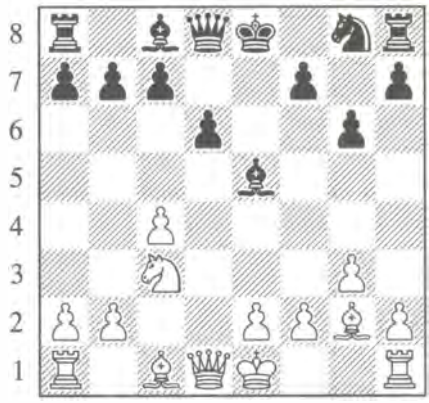
14.♖xd7!N ♔xd7 15.♗xf5† ♔e8 16.♘d5 ♔f7 17.♘xc7 ♖b8 18.♘b5

This would secure a huge advantage for White.

7.♘xe5 ♗xe5

Once again the pawn recapture is simply bad: 7...dxe5? 8.♕xd8† ♔xd8 9.♗g5† f6 10.♖d1† ♔e8 11.♘b5! Black loses at least a pawn, Vaulin – Belotserkovsky, Krasnodar 1997.

8.♗g2



8...♘e7

Black has also tried:

8...♗g7 9.0–0 ♘e7

But then White has a powerful blow:

10.c5!

Black experiences definite problems:

10...♘f5

After 10...0–0 11.cxd6 cxd6 12.♗f4 Black is clearly worse.

11.♕a4†!

A very annoying check.

11...♔f8

A sad necessity; Black's problem is that 11...c6 runs into 12.♖d1! followed by e2-e4 and Black loses his d-pawn.

12.♖d1 ♗d7 13.♕b4±

There is no doubt White is much better, with Black's king stuck on f8, Milos – Cifuentes Parada, Buenos Aires 1991.

9.0–0 0–0

Of course 9...♗g7 leads to the position that was examined above via the 8...♗g7 move order.

10.♗g5

Instead 10.♗h6 ♖e8 11.♕d2 would promise White a pleasant edge, but the text move is even more challenging.

10...f6

If 10...c6 then White continues his natural development: 11.♕d2 ♗e6 12.b3 ♕c7 13.♖ad1 White has a pleasant game, with definite pressure against the d6-pawn. 13...♘f5? (somewhat better would have been 13...♖ad8, although here after 14.♘e4 f6 15.♗h6 ♖fe8 16.♗f4! White has serious pressure) Now in Tran Minh – Nguyen Hoang, Vietnam 2002, White overlooked the simple 14.e4 with the point that after 14...♘d4 White has 15.♗e3! c5 16.♗xd4 cxd4 17.♘b5 winning a pawn.

11.♗e3

White's prospects are clearly preferable due to his favourable pawn structure and Black's insecure dark-squared bishop. The game continued:

11...♗e6

If 11...♘f5 then White responds with 12.♕d5† ♔g7 13.♗d2 keeping all the pressure.

12.♕d3 ♕d7 13.♖fd1 ♖ae8

Now White can strike with:



14.c5! ♘c6

The main point is that Black cannot play 14...d5 in view of 15.♘xd5 ♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♕xd5† ♕xd5 18.♖xd5 ♗xb2 19.♖b1 followed by ♖xb7 with an extra pawn for White.

15.cxd6 cxd6

White had a significant positional advantage in Sorokin – Shariyazdanov, Dubai 2001, and now after the natural move:

16.♘e4

Black is left with a very poor position.

C3) 5...exd4 6.♘xd4

This is also quite a popular line for Black. Now his main continuation is:



6...♘e7

Black also has a serious alternative:

6...♘c6

Theory considers that White has a promising position after:

7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♗g2 ♘e7 9.♗g5 0–0

Another option is 9...f6 10.♗f4 ♗e6 (Black has also played 10...0–0 when I like the idea of 11.♕a4N with the following point: 11...♖b8 12.b3 f5 13.♖c1 White's queen is pretty annoying on a4, while 13...a6 runs into the strong 14.c5 d5 15.0–0 with a clear positional advantage.) 11.♕a4 Again I like this jump; the white queen puts a lot of pressure on Black's queenside pawns. 11...♕d7 12.0–0 0–0 13.♖fd1 White intends to continue with c4-c5, and Black is unable to stop this idea. This example shows the danger of Black's position: 13...♖fb8 14.c5 d5 15.e4! ♖xb2? 16.exd5+– Black suddenly found himself in a lost position in Staiger – Frick, Germany 1992.

10.0–0

After the inaccurate 10.♗xc6 ♖b8 Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

10...♖b8

The text is Black's first choice according to theory, but we should also consider two other possibilities:

10...♗e6 Now I found an interesting innovation: 11.♖c1!N (The usual line is 11.♕d3 ♖b8 12.b3 c5 13.♕d2, but my idea is to get the same position with an extra tempo for White.) 11...f6 (Other options include 11...♗xc4 12.♗xc6 ♖b8 13.♕a4 ♗e6 14.b3 when White has a pleasant advantage, and 11...♖b8 12.b3 c5 13.♕d2 when we get exactly the kind of position we want. We shall examine this type of position in the 10...♖b8 line.) 12.♗e3 ♗xc4 13.♕a4 ♗e6 14.♗xc6 ♘xc6 15.♕xc6± Black's bishop pair is irrelevant, while White's better pawn structure makes his play much easier.

10...f6 11.♗f4 ♗e6 Once again this allows a thematic sortie: 12.♕a4! ♖b8 13.b3 Now Black tried to build up an attack on the kingside to make up for his problems on the queenside: 13...g5 14.♗d2 f5 In the game Esposito – Reinhardt, Buenos Aires 1963, White obtained a pleasant edge with 15.♖ac1, but I do not see any problem with capturing the pawn: 15.♗xc6 ♘xc6 16.♕xc6 f4 17.♖ac1 ♖f7 18.gxf4! gxf4 19.♔h1 Black does not have any serious compensation for the pawn.

11.♕d2 c5 12.b3

White makes all the necessary prophylactic moves to neutralize Black's initiative on the long diagonal. I believe White's chances are slightly better in this position. Let's see a few examples:

12...♗e6

After 12...f6 it is a good idea not to swap dark-squared bishops: 13.♗f4 ♗b7 This is Birnboim – Radulov, Berlin 1986, and now I believe White should also avoid trading light-squared bishops with: 14.e4 ♘c6 15.♗e3! White has established control over the d4-square and enjoys a pleasant game, though Black remains pretty solid.

13.♖ad1 f6 14.♗f4

Again it is the same idea: White keeps the bishops on the board, whereas 14.♗h6 ♗xh6 15.♕xh6 ♕d7 would ease Black's task, as in Hulak – Schneider, Neu Isenburg (rapid) 1992.

14...♔h8?

This slip allows White an unexpected tactical idea:

15.♘b5! a6 16.♘xc7

The point.

16...♕xc7 17.♗xd6 ♕d7 18.♗xb8 ♕xd2 19.♖xd2 ♖xb8 20.♖d6

White had quickly gained a decisive advantage in Magerramov – Kantsler, Podolsk 1989.

6...♘f6 7.♗g2 0–0 8.0–0 is almost certainly heading towards a normal King's Indian. For example, 8...♘bd7 9.e4 immediately leads to the KID, while after 8...♖e8 9.h3! it is hard to imagine Black has anything cleverer than 9...♘bd7 when 10.e4 transposes to Line C2 in Chapter 28.

7.♗g2 ♘bc6

The other move order 7...0–0 8.0–0 ♘bc6 9.♘xc6 leads to the same positions.

8.♘xc6 ♘xc6

The alternative 8...bxc6 leads to a position that was examined in the 6...♘c6 line.



9.0–0 0–0 10.♗d2

This is the best way of solving the problems on the long diagonal. This pawn structure can arise in many openings, and in my opinion White always keeps slight but lasting pressure if Black is unable to create something special on the kingside. Note that White must avoid 10.♕d2, since it allows 10...a5 11.b3 a4 with counterplay.

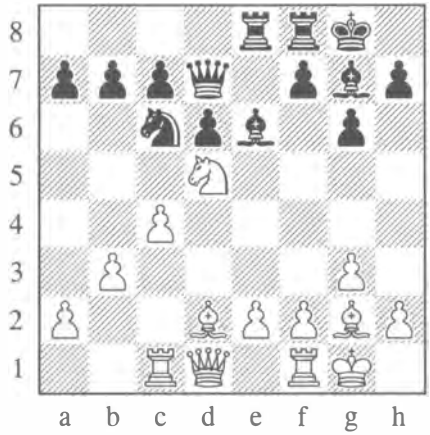
10...♗e6 11.b3 ♕d7

Now in almost every game where this position was reached White continued with 12.♖e1, preventing the exchange of light-squared bishops. In this case, that plan is a bit slow and White can play more aggressively.

12.♘d5! ♖ae8

Capturing the rook would lead to a pleasant advantage for White after the fairly forced: 12...♗xa1 13.♕xa1 ♗xd5 14.♗h6 ♘e5 15.cxd5 f5 16.h3! Taking control of the g4-square and also threatening f2-f4. 16...♕e7 17.♗xf8 ♖xf8 18.♕d4 Black's pawns on the queenside are permanent targets for White's pieces.

13.♖c1



Now the following encounter showed rather thematic play for this kind of pawn structure.

13...♘d8 14.♗c3 f6 15.♕d2 c6 16.♘f4 ♗f5 17.♖cd1 ♘f7 18.♖fe1±

Black has a passive but solid position, but at the same time it is obvious White has a pleasant edge, Smejkal – Gross, Czech Republic 1995.

C4) 5...♘d7 6.♗g2



We now have a split depending on which square Black selects for his g8-knight. The lines are **C41) 6...♘h6** and **C42) 6...♘e7**. Of course 6...♘gf6 is just a transposition to a normal King's Indian Defence.

C41) 6...♘h6

A very strange move in my opinion, but to my surprise it has been played in more than a hundred games.

7.c5!?

A surprising move, which appears to be quite strong, as White changes the pawn structure in his favour. I should mention that I believe the natural 7.e4 is also sufficient for an advantage.

7...0–0

Black also has many other options:

7...♘f5 8.cxd6 cxd6 9.♗g5!

From Black's point of view, this is an annoying move.

9...♕a5

It is understandable that Black does not want to play the weakening 9...f6 10.♗c1 0–0 11.0–0 when Black's position is rather unpleasant, as his pieces lack coordination. For example: 11...♘b6 12.♕b3† ♔h8 13.a4 exd4 14.♘b5±

10.dxe5 dxe5 11.0–0 h6

Also 11...0–0 12.e4 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♘d5 does not help Black.

12.♗d2 0–0

This is T. Paehtz – Peev, Plovdiv 1988, and now direct action was called for:



13.e4N ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♘d5 ♕d8 16.♗b4 ♖e8 17.♖c1±

Black has serious problems.

7...exd4 8.♗xh6 ♗xh6 9.♕xd4 0–0 10.cxd6 ♗g7 (instead after 10...c6 11.0–0 ♗g7 12.♕d2± Black failed to achieve any compensation in Makarov – Sekulic, Cetinje 1993) 11.dxc7 ♕xc7 12.♕b4 Black's play is hardly enough to compensate for the pawn.

7...dxc5 8.dxe5 c6 9.0–0 0–0 This is Weber – Maassen, corr. 1998, and now I found the following improvement: 10.♗f4N ♘g4 (Another line runs 10...♘f5 11.e3 ♕e7 12.g4! ♘h4 13.♘xh4 ♕xh4 14.♗g3 ♕e7 15.f4 and White has a promising position.) 11.e6! fxe6 12.♗d6 ♖e8 13.♕c2 White has excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

8.cxd6 cxd6 9.e4

It is essential to restrict Black's knight on h6. For example, less convincing is 9.0–0 ♘f5 10.♗g5 ♕b6.

9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘c5 11.0–0 ♘g4

Black has managed to activate his minor pieces, but he had to pay a high price, as his pawn structure is damaged and the d6-pawn is an obvious target.

12.♖b1 h5

In Ivanchuk – Yusupov, Brussels 1991, White could have immediately targeted the d6-pawn:



13.♘db5!N

Black has serious problems defending his d6-pawn.

C42) 6...♘e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.e4

The position is similar to the fianchetto line against ...♘bd7 in the King's Indian, except the other black knight is on e7 instead of the normal f6-square.



8...exd4

This is certainly Black's main choice, but I will also examine two other options, 8...h6 and 8...♘c6:

8...h6 9.♗e3

Now there is a further split:

a) 9...♔h7

This does not promise Black an easy life. For example:

10.♕c2 c5

The main point of White's 10th move is that Black cannot play 10...f5 in view of 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♘h4! c6 14.♖ad1± followed by 15.♗h3.

11.dxc5 dxc5

This is Bachmann – Schneider, Berlin 1987, and now I like a natural developing move:



12.♖fd1N

Threatening ♗xc5. One key line continues:

12...♕a5 13.a3!

With the following point:

13...♘c6? 14.b4 cxb4 15.axb4 ♕xb4 16.♘d5 ♕d6 17.♘b6

White wins material.

b) 9...f5

This advance is not so effective here, unlike in positions where White has developed his bishop to e2.

10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♕d2

Surprisingly, Black has a good score in this position, not losing a single game. Objectively, White has better prospects, due to the passivity of Black's minor pieces. For example:

11...♔h7 12.♖ad1 c6 13.♗c5! ♕e8 14.♗d6 b6 15.exf5 gxf5

In R. Miles – G. Morris, Wales (ch) 1992, White overlooked a crushing blow:



16.♘h4!N

Black cannot avoid material losses.

8...♘c6

Here I recommend:

9.♗g5 f6

Another possible reply is 9...♗f6 and here I found an interesting idea: 10.♗xf6 ♕xf6 (If 10...♘xf6 11.h3± then White enjoys a pleasant game. Black cannot hope for equality without his dark-squared bishop, Kotov – Lein, Leningrad 1962.) 11.♕d2!N With this small trick White continues his normal development. 11...exd4 (or 11...♕d8 12.♖ad1±) 12.♘d5 ♕d8 13.♘xd4 White has a comfortable edge.

10.♗e3

White has an improved version of the King's Indian. I do not think we need to investigate this position too deeply, so I will just show a few instructive points:

10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘de5 12.b3 ♘xd4

Another important line is: 12...♘g4 13.♘xc6 bxc6 (the main point is that after 13...♘xe3 14.♘xd8 ♘xd1 White has the strong 15.♘b5! winning material) 14.♗d2±

13.♗xd4 ♗g4 14.f3 ♗e6 15.♖c1

White is better, due to his extra space, but the next move significantly eases his task:

15...f5?! 16.f4 ♘c6 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.exf5 ♗xf5

In B. Lalic – Soos, Bad Mergentheim 1988, White could have played:

19.♘d5N ♔g8 20.♕d2±

White has a clear positional advantage.

9.♘xd4 ♘c6

The whole idea is to activate the passive knight from e7. Black can also try a couple of other moves:

9...♘e5 10.b3 ♘5c6

After 10...♘7c6 11.♘de2 the play would transpose to the 9...♘c6 line.

11.♗e3

Black can make a few exchanges, but he will fail to equalize:

11...♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♗xd4 13.♕xd4 ♗e6 14.f4 f6 15.♖ad1

White had a pleasant game in Kharitonov – Azmaiparashvili, Jurmala 1983.

9...a6 10.b3 ♖b8

This has been played a few times, and I believe the following line is the best way for White to fight for an advantage:

11.♗e3 ♘e5 12.♕d2

Also worthy of consideration is 12.a4!?N ♘g4 13.♗f4.

12...c5 13.♘de2 b5

Black has carried out the usual plan, but White is well mobilized and in the game Sterpu – S. Foisor, Romania 2006, she could have tried:

14.♖ad1!N

The next few moves are basically forced:

14...bxc4 15.♗xc5 ♘d3 16.♗a7! ♖b7 17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.♘xd4±

Eventually, after exchanging on b3, White will have a small but stable advantage, due to the weak d6-pawn.

10.♘de2

White's most popular continuation and it looks as though it deserves to be.



Black now has three main lines: **C421) 10...♘de5**, **C422) 10...♘c5** and **C423) 10...a5**. There is also a tricky minor line to be dealt with first:

10...a6

A rare continuation, but one that scores well for Black! I managed to discover a new way of fighting for an advantage:

11.♗e3N ♘de5

If 11...♖b8 12.♖c1 and White is ready to meet 12...b5 with 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘d5 ♗b7 15.b3± with some pressure.

12.b3 ♖b8

I doubt Black has compensation after 12...b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘xb5 ♗a6 15.♘bc3.

13.h3 b5 14.f4 ♘d7 15.cxb5 axb5 16.♖c1±

And again White is ready to meet the ...b7-b5 idea; he is threatening the thematic 17.♘d5.

10...♘ce5 11.b3 ♘c5

This looks very active, but in fact White controls all the important squares.

12.♗e3 c6

And now in the game Seirawan – Welin, Reykjavik 1986, White should have chosen a calm preparatory move:



13.h3N

In the game, after the inaccurate 13.♕d2 Black achieved good counterplay with 13...f5 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♖ad1 ♕a5. After the text move White is ready for Black's pawn break:

13...f5 14.♗xc5! dxc5 15.f4 ♘f7 16.e5±

Certainly Black is very solid, but White effectively has an extra pawn in the centre.

C421) 10...♘de5 11.b3 f5

This line has been tested many times in practice.

12.f4 ♘g4

A less popular line is:

12...♘f7

Now White should continue with:

13.♗b2 fxe4 14.♕d2!

This is an important move in White's strategy; he intends to recapture the e4-pawn with his knight and then exchange the dark-squared bishops. Black's knight is too passive on f7 and it is hard to see how he can oppose White's simple idea. The following line is a good example:

14...e3 15.♕xe3 ♗f5 16.♕d2 ♘h6 17.h3 ♗d7 18.g4!

Preventing the black knight activating via f5 and maintaining a clear positional advantage, S. Farago – Resika, Budapest 2000.

13.h3



13...♘f6

The second option is:

13...♘h6 14.♖b1

Also worth considering is the following new idea: 14.♕d5† ♔h8 15.♗b2 fxe4 16.♕d2! White has a pleasant game after 16...e3 17.♕xe3 ♘f5 18.♕d2±.

14...fxe4

Better would have been 14...♗e6, but even here after 15.♗e3 ♕d7 16.♕d2 White has the better chances.

15.g4!

The point; now Black's knight is badly placed on h6, so his desperate sacrifice is understandable:

15...♘xg4 16.hxg4 ♗xg4

Sadly for Black, the sac was convincingly refuted in the following encounter:

17.♕e1 ♕d7 18.♘xe4 ♖ae8 19.♗b2!±

This is Arkell – Azmaiparashvili, Oviedo (rapid) 1992.

14.exf5 ♗xf5

Of course the alternative is:

14...gxf5

Now the play continues:

15.♗b2 ♗e6 16.♕d2 ♕d7 17.♘d5

This is the thematic plan in this kind of position; first White consolidates and then at some moment comes ♘d5.

17...♖ae8

This natural move appears to be inaccurate. Black should have played 17...♘e4 but even so after 18.♗xe4 fxe4 19.♗xg7 ♕xg7 20.♔g2 ♖ae8 21.♘e3 White has a slight positional advantage.

18.♘xf6†! ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 ♖xf6 20.♖ae1

It transpires that the black king is seriously weakened without the dark-squared bishop to protect it. White had a solid advantage in Eingorn – Jakobsen, Hamburg 1999.

15.g4 ♗e6

The sac is still not a serious threat: 15...♘xg4?! 16.hxg4 ♗xg4 In Nedela – Bielczyk, Slovakia 1995, White made a series of good defensive

moves: 17.♗d5†! ♔h8 18.♗b2 ♖e8 19.♕d2 ♕h4 20.♖f2 And Black ended up in a lost position.

16.♗b2 ♕d7 17.♕d2

Here I tried to improve on Black's play:

17...h5N

But this novelty still falls short. Black must find an improvement somewhere, as White easily gained a big advantage after 17...♔h8 18.♘g3 ♖ae8 19.♘d5 ♘g8 in Csom – Riazantsev, Budapest 1999, and now just 20.♖ae1±.

18.f5! gxf5 19.g5 ♘e4

Or 19...♘h7 20.h4± followed by ♘f4.

20.♘xe4 ♗xb2 21.♕xb2 fxe4 22.♘f4 ♘e5 23.♕e2!±

Black is in trouble.

C422) 10...♘c5 11.♗e3

Worse is 11.♖b1 because it gives Black an opportunity to break free: 11...f5 12.b4 ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 fxe4 14.♗xe4 ♗f5 Black has comfortable play.



11...a5

The most popular alternative is:

11...f5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♕d2 a5 14.♖ad1

This is the position White should aim for in this line; he has consolidated his pieces in an optimal way and now he should slowly develop his play in the centre and on the kingside.

14...a4

Now in the game P. Nikolic – Damljanovic, Manila 1990, White opted for 15.♘d4, which eased Black's task after heavy exchanges on d4. This is why I developed another idea:



15.♘f4!?N ♔h8 16.h3±

White does not need to rush, but in some lines he can consider g3-g4 to push away the bishop. White's chances are clearly preferable.

12.♖b1!

Now the play transposes to the main line.

It is important to understand that the natural 12.♕d2 is actually a serious inaccuracy, as it allows Black to create counterplay on the queenside with: 12...♗e6! 13.b3 (or 13.♘d5 ♘e5 14.b3 a4⇄) 13...a4 14.♖ab1 axb3 15.axb3 ♖a3 As in Bentzen – E. Mortensen, Denmark 2002.

C423) 10...a5 11.♖b1

The main idea of this move is not to allow Black to open up the a-file, as would happen

after the natural 11.b3 a4 12.♖b1 axb3 13.axb3 when Black has a totally reliable position.

11...♘c5 12.♗e3

Black is doing fine after 12.b3 f5. After the text move we reach the final crossroads for Black in this line.

12...f5

The most natural continuation and also Black's main idea to activate his pieces. Various other possibilities have also been tried:

12...a4

This gains some space on the queenside, but after:

13.f4

It will be hard for Black to carry out the ...f7-f5 advance, since White will always have the idea of e4-e5, exploiting the vulnerable position of the black knight on c5.

13...♗g4 14.h3 ♗xe2

In Ferrer Duran – Todorcevic, Ponferrada 1992, White wrongly recaptured with the knight, but we can do better:



15.♕xe2!N

This is very strong, for example:

15...♖e8

15...a3 is possible, but White retains an edge with accurate play: 16.♖fd1! axb2 17.e5 ♘a4 18.♘xa4 ♖xa4 19.♕xb2 ♖b4 20.♕c1 ♕e7 21.♖xb4 ♘xb4 22.a3 ♘c6 23.exd6 cxd6 24.♗f2 The bishop pair secures White a pleasant advantage.

16.e5 ♘d7 17.♕f2 dxe5 18.f5

White has a strong initiative.

Black cannot afford to play slowly in this position: 12...♖e8 13.b3 ♗g4 14.f3 ♗d7 15.♕d2 b6 16.♘d4 ♘e5 17.h3 f6 18.♔h2 ♘f7 19.♖fe1 Black ended up in a very passive position in J. Horvath – Todorcevic, Igalo 1994.

Actually Black can open the a-file by means of:

12...♘e5 13.b3 a4

But here White is firmly in control after:

14.h3

If 14.b4 then 14...♘e6.

14...axb3 15.axb3

White intends to chase the black knights from the centre with f2-f4 and b3-b4, while if Black tries to play in the centre it will backfire:

15...f5 16.f4 ♘ed7?!

Better was 16...♘f7 when White should react with the standard idea: 17.♗xc5 (and not 17.e5 ♘e6 when Black is quite okay) 17...dxc5 18.e5 With better chances for White.

17.exf5! gxf5 18.b4 ♘e6 19.♖e1 ♘f6 20.♕c2 ♕e8 21.♘d5

White was much better in Nestorovic – S. Nikolic, Belgrade 1990.



13.♘f4!?N

This is my new idea. Previously White has tried 13.b3 and 13.♗xc5, but without much success. The simple plan is to activate White's passive knight, using the temporary vulnerability of the a2-g8 diagonal.

For 13.b3 ♕e7, see the 12.b3 line.

13...♗xc3

Accepting the challenge, but Black also has a solid alternative:

13...♘xe4 14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♗f5 16.♗d5†!

White has nothing special after 16.♗xf5 ♖xf5 17.♘e6 ♕d7 18.♘xg7 ♕xg7 and, despite the absence of his dark-squared bishop, Black is not worse.

16...♔h8 17.♘e6 ♗xe6 18.♗xe6

White gains the advantage of the two bishops, as he manages to keep his light-squared bishop alive after:

18...♘e5 19.b3 c6 20.♗h3±

Perhaps White's advantage is not so big, but it will certainly last, thanks to his bishop pair.

14.bxc3!?

This is the main point of my idea; not dangerous for Black is 14.♗xc5 ♗g7 15.♗e3 ♕e7! with more or less balanced play.

14...♘xe4

Certainly inferior is 14...fxe4? 15.♕d5† ♖f7 16.♗xc5 dxc5 17.♗xe4± with a clear advantage.

15.♘d5

White has sacrificed a central pawn, but in return he has gained plenty of play in the centre and on both long diagonals. Let's see a couple of plausible continuations:

15...♘e5

15...b6 is a desirable solution to White's pressure along the b-file, but unfortunately for Black it is hit by 16.♘xb6! cxb6 17.♕d5† ♖f7 18.♗xe4 fxe4 19.♕xc6 ♗b7 20.♕a4!± and White starts collecting the weak pawns.



16.♖e1

Adding one more piece into the play; Black's position is very shaky. For example:

16...c6 17.f3 ♘xf3† 18.♗xf3 cxd5 19.♕xd5† ♖f7 20.♖b6 ♕c7 21.♗xe4 fxe4 22.♖xd6

Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, White retains the better chances due to his active pieces.

Conclusion:

The Modern Defence creates many transpositional options for Black (obviously to the King's Indian, but also, for example, to the Benoni or even Benko Gambit). The lines above should be studied with care by White players, as one slip in the move order can allow Black's counterplay to spring to life. With accurate play, White keeps control and good chances of an advantage.



Minor Systems



2...b6

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 b6

3.f3!?

A) 3...e6 **539**
B) 3...♘c6 **540**

A) note to 4...♗b4†



9.♗e3!N

B) note to 8...d6



13.dxc6N

B) after 13...dxc5



14.♗g5!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 b6

Needless to say, the text is a very rare move at the highest level, but it is very popular in blitz games. It also prevents White from playing the Catalan opening.

3.f3!?

A very ambitious continuation. White grabs more space in the centre using the fact that Black is not really ready to fight back with 3...d5.

Another critical line, according to theory, is: 3.♘c3 ♗b7 4.♕c2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3 e6 7.e4 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♗e7 9.♗b5† c6 10.♗d3 c5 11.0–0 cxd4 12.cxd4 0–0 13.♗b2 ♘c6 14.a3 This simply transposes to a position from the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian Defence.

Very often White opts for 3.♘f3 ♗b7 and now both 4.♘c3 and 4.g3 transpose to the Queen's Indian after 4...e6.

After 3.f3!? Black has a range of minor options that we will consider before moving on to the main lines:

3...♗b7

This move makes no sense; you do not have to prepare for such moves. Having said that, I will offer one example just to be helpful:

4.e4 e5?

This idea works only rarely.

5.dxe5 ♘xe4 6.fxe4 ♕h4† 7.♔d2 ♕f2† 8.♕e2 ♕d4† 9.♔e1 ♗xe4 10.♘c3 ♗b4 11.♗d2

White was winning in Euwe – Abrahams, London 1946.

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6 7.♗e3 ♗b7 8.♘h3 ♘bd7

This position occurred in Kraidman – Hoelting, Dresden 2007, where White continued with the modest 9.♘f2. I prefer the following idea:

9.♗e2!?N ♗e7 10.♘f4!? 0–0

White is ready for 10...c5, when he can play 11.e5! ♘d5 12.♘cxd5 exd5 13.e6!, with an obvious advantage.

11.e5

Less clear would be: 11.0–0 c5 12.d5 exd5 13.♘fxd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♗d6!

11...♘e8 12.♕b3

It is essential for White to place his rook on d1 quickly. For example, 12.0–0 c5 looks fine for Black.

12...c5 13.♖d1 cxd4 14.♖xd4

White definitely has pressure.

Now let's see the more important lines, **A) 3...e6** and **B) 3...♘c6**.

A) 3...e6 4.e4



4...♗b4†

Alternatively Black has:

4...♘xe4? is bold, but it does not work here. 5.fxe4 ♕h4† This is Lehmann – Montoro, Germany 2002. Now the simplest way forward would be to play 6.♔e2!N ♕xe4† 7.♔f2 followed by ♘f3 and ♘c3 with a large advantage.

4...d5

After the natural:

5.cxd5 exd5 6.e5 ♘fd7 7.f4

White's position seems to me very promising.

7...c5

7...♗b4† 8.♗d2 (also worthy of consideration is 8.♘c3 c5 9.♘f3 0–0 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.0–0 cxd4 12.♘b5! with the better chances) 8...♗xd2† This was played in Marian – Jurasin, Germany 1982. Now White should continue with the natural recapture 9.♕xd2!N. I believe White gets an even better version of the 7...c5-line. For instance, 9...c5 10.♘c3 0–0 11.♘f3 ♗b7 12.♗e2 ♘c6 13.0–0 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♘xd4 15.♕xd4 ♘c5 16.f5! with good attacking chances, due to the idea of 17.f5.

8.♘f3 ♘c6

Now it is important for White to play:



9.♗e3!N

Black gains normal play after 9.♘c3 cxd4! 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♕xd4 ♗b7 12.♗e3 ♗c5 13.♕d2 0–0 as demonstrated by Lev – Kogan, Tel Aviv 1996.

9...♗b7 10.♗e2

White's chances are much better after either 10...♗e7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♘c3 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♘c5 15.f5! or 10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗c5 12.0–0 0–0 13.♘c3.

5.♗d2 ♗xd2† 6.♕xd2 d6 7.♘c3 0–0



8.0–0–0

This very strong move prevents Black from playing 8...c5. In both games where this position occurred, White gained an advantage.

8...♕e7

8...♗b7 9.g4 a6 10.g5 ♘fd7 11.h4± was Alber – Gazic, Moerlenbach 2004.

9.g4 c5 10.d5 e5 11.♘ge2 ♘e8 12.h4 a6 13.♘g3

White had a very promising position in Kruppa – Simonian, Kiev 2008.

B) 3...♘c6

This seems to me the most reliable move for Black.

4.♘c3

Very unclear is 4.d5 ♘e5 5.e4 e6 6.♘c3 ♗c5.

Premature would be 4.e4 e5 5.d5?! in view of 5...♘d4.

4...e5 5.d5 ♘e7

The downside to Black's plan is that his knight will have to move yet again to free the f8-bishop.

6.e4 ♘g6 7.♗e3 ♗c5



8.♕d2

We have reached a very complex middlegame, where I prefer White's prospects due to two very important details:

Firstly, Black's knight has taken a few moves to reach g6, where it is not well placed.

Secondly, ...b7-b6 has slightly weakened Black's queenside and significantly complicates Black's counterplay there. For example, the thematic ...c7-c6 hardly works now, as Black cannot recapture on c6 with the b-pawn.

I do not like 8.♗xc5 bxc5 9.d6 and indeed after 9...0–0 10.♘ge2 ♖b8 11.dxc7 ♕xc7 12.♕d2 d6 13.♖d1 ♖d8 14.g3 ♘f8 15.♗g2 ♘e6 Black obtained a nice position in Manolache – Zajarnyi, Romania 2000.

8...d6

Black has also tried: 8...0–0 9.♘ge2 ♗xe3 10.♕xe3 d6 11.♘c1 (the immediate 11.g3 followed by ♗g2 or ♗h3 was an interesting alternative) 11...♗d7 12.g3 c6 S. Buckley – J. Cobb, Newport 1999. White should now have played 13.dxc6N ♗xc6 14.♗h3 a6 15.a4 ♕c7 16.0–0 ♗b7 17.b3±, retaining the better chances.

9.♘ge2 ♗d7 10.♘c1 0–0 11.♘d3 ♘e8 12.0–0–0 f5?

Before carrying out the typical ...f7-f5 advance Black should first trade dark-squared bishops with 12...♗xe3 13.♕xe3 f5. Even so, White is better after 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.♘f2± due to his control over the e4-square.

13.♘xc5 dxc5

So far we have been following Bodnar – Zajarnyi, Lvov 1999, where White now took prematurely on f5.



Instead White only has to play a few simple moves to secure a great position:

14.♗g5!N ♕c8 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.h4

White has a serious edge.

Conclusion:

2...b6 is a minor line on merit. With 3.f3 White can secure a pleasant edge by preventing Black from escaping to a respectable Queen's Indian.



Minor Systems



b-pawn Systems

Variation Index

1.d4

A) 1...b5	**543**
B) 1...a6	**545**
C) 1...c6 2.c4 b5	**548**
D) 1...b6	**550**

B) note to 5...c5



9.d5N

B) note to 7...♗e7



13.♕xe6†!N

C) note to 9...0–0



10.a4!N

In this chapter we shall look at a collection of rather odd systems where Black decides to fight for the centre by advancing his b-pawn and putting the bishop on b7. It is not a great surprise that I have found a route to an advantage for White in all of these systems, as Black's plan is a rather slow way of fighting for the centre, and does little to develop the kingside.

The systems that involve ...b7-b5 at some point are probably the most dubious, as this space-grab on the queenside costs further time because the pawn is exposed. It is not a coincidence that this strategy is a bit risky...

1.d4

Here we shall consider **A) 1...b5**, **B) 1...a6**, **C) 1...c6 2.c4 b5** and **D) 1...b6**.

A) 1...b5

This leads to similar kinds of position as in the 1...a6 variation, but 1...b5 seems to me to be more playable than 1...a6. The main difference is that by attacking White's e4-pawn, Black forces ♘bd2, while in the 1...a6 variation White has time to castle and play ♖e1.

2.e4 ♗b7 3.♗d3

The same arrangement of minor pieces as we shall see against 1...a6. I tried to vary White's play and investigated 3.f3, but I found Black's position to be pretty decent after 3...a6.

Also 3.♗xb5 ♗xe4 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.0–0 e6 6.c4 ♗e7 7.♘c3 ♗b7 is perfectly playable for Black.

3...♘f6

3...a6 4.♘f3 would transpose to the 1...a6 variation.

4.♘d2 e6

4...c5 5.c3 e6 6.♘gf3 leads to the same position as in the main line.

5.♘gf3 a6

The most playable alternative is:

5...c5 6.dxc5 ♗xc5

Here White has an extra option that looks very promising to me.

7.e5

The normal 7.0–0 a6 would transpose to our main line.

7...♘g4 8.0–0 a6?!

Somewhat better would be 8...♕c7, although after 9.♘e4 0–0 the position is very dangerous for Black (instead 9...♘xe5 10.♗f4 ♘xf3† 11.♕xf3 ♕b6 12.♕g3! would give White a strong attack as well). 10.♗f4 f6 11.♘xc5 ♕xc5 12.exf6 ♖xf6 13.♗d6! ♕b6 14.♗g3! White has clear edge.

With the text move, we have followed Corso – Accardo, Rome 1990.



9.h3N

This simple move secures White an advantage. For example:

9...♘xf2 10.♖xf2 ♗xf2† 11.♔xf2 d6 12.♕e1 0–0 13.exd6 ♕xd6 14.♘e4 ♕c7 15.♗d2±

White's material advantage should tell in the long run.

6.0–0 c5

Another option is:

6...d5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.♘b3!

An important move, as Black gets quite a decent position after 8.c3 c5 9.♖e1 ♘c6 10.♘f1 ♗e7.

8...c5 9.dxc5 ♘xc5 10.♘xc5 ♗xc5



11.c3!

It is much easier for White to seize the initiative when he controls the d4-square.

11...♘c6

This position was reached in G. Flear – C. Rossi, Asti 1997, and now I like the following set-up for White:

12.♗f4N

Also worthy of consideration is 12.b4!? followed by a2-a4.

12...♗e7 13.♕e2 0–0 14.♖ad1 ♖c8 15.♗b1±

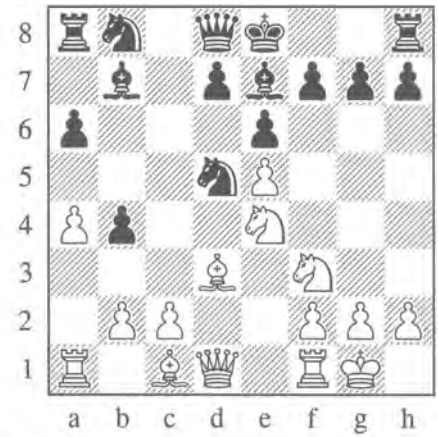
White has good prospects of seizing the initiative on the kingside.

7.dxc5

The following consequences are pretty much forced:

7...♗xc5 8.e5 ♘d5 9.♘e4 ♗e7 10.a4 b4

Black tried 10...♘b4 in Swinkels – Serdijn, Vlissingen 2006, which seems not such a bad alternative. In my opinion White should try: 11.♖e1N ♘xd3 (otherwise Black would have to reckon with ♗f1, leaving Black's knight badly misplaced on b4) 12.♕xd3 b4 13.♗g5 ♗xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘c6 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♖ad1 0–0 17.♖d6 ♖fc8 18.♖ed1 ♖a7 19.♘d4! White has serious pressure.



11.♘fd2!

I like this positional idea. The knight is heading for c4 and at the same time freeing the d1-h5 diagonal for White's queen.

11...0–0

Black can try an immediate 11...f5 but it is quite dangerous, as after 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♕h5† g6 (as in Myc – Kania, Lublin 1999) it is easy to improve on White's play with the natural-looking 15.♕h6N. The following illustrative line shows the downsides of Black's position: 15...♕e7 16.♘c4 d5 17.♘b6 ♖a7 18.♖e1 e5 19.♗f4↑ Black's position is very dangerous with his king stuck in the centre.

12.♘c4 f5

If 12...♘c6, apart from 13.♕g4 which would probably transpose to our main line, White has the even stronger 13.♕h5 g6 14.♕h6! with good chances of seizing a dangerous initiative.

13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.♘xf6† ♗xf6

Here I found the following improvement:

15.♕g4!?N ♘c6 16.♗f4

And now White's chances are preferable after both 16...♘e7 17.a5 ♘d5 18.♗g3± and 16...a5 17.♖ad1 ♘e7 18.♕g3±.

B) 1...a6

This is certainly quite a dubious opening that allows White too much space. It is rather famous, thanks to the sensational win of the late Tony Miles (the biggest expert in this opening) over Anatoly Karpov in 1980.

2.e4 b5 3.♘f3 ♗b7 4.♗d3

The most natural set-up for White.

4...e6

I have known since childhood that the following line was inferior:

4...♘f6 5.e5 ♘d5

The key move is:

6.♘g5!

This leads to serious problems for Black.



6...e6

Quite interesting is 6...♘b4. Now I believe White should simply play: 7.♗e4N (After 7.♗xh7 ♖xh7 8.♘xh7 as in Vl. Schulz – B. Schmitt, Baden 1997, I surprisingly found a serious improvement for Black: 8...♗e4!N For example: 9.♘xf8 ♘xc2† 10.♔f1 ♔xf8 11.♘c3 ♗h7 12.♖b1 b4! with good play for Black.) 7...♗xe4 8.♘xe4 In my opinion White has much better prospects in this position, for example: 8...e6 9.♘bc3 ♗e7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗f4 Black's knight is obviously misplaced on b4, as the following line proves: 11...d6 12.exd6 cxd6 13.d5!±

7.♕f3!

This is definitely the best move, as 7.♘xh7 ♕h4 8.♘xf8 ♖xf8 is not so clear since Black gets some compensation for the pawn.

7...f5

If 7...♕e7 then 8.♘xh7! ♘c6 9.c3 0–0–0 as in Handke – Poley, Stockholm 2004. White should continue 10.♕e2 with the following point: 10...♖xh7 (after 10...f6 White is ready to start activity on the queenside by means of 11.a4!±) 11.♗xh7 g6 12.h4 ♗g7 13.h5 ♖h8 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♖h3! Black's idea of trapping White light-squared bishop fails.

8.exf6 ♕xf6 9.♗xh7!±

White has an extra pawn, Kozhuharov – Vasilev, Sofia 2006.

5.0–0 c5

Black's main continuation. Let's have a look at a couple of alternatives:

5...♘f6 6.♖e1 and now there is further split:

a) 6...♗e7

I have come to the conclusion that White's best option is:

7.♘bd2

The main point is that if 7.c3 d5 8.e5 ♘fd7 Black controls the g5-square and will continue with ...c5 and ...♘c6. I consider this position quite playable for Black.

7...d5

I also examined 7...c5 8.e5 ♘d5 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♘e4 ♗e7. Now we have the same position as in the 1...b5-line, but with the extra move ♖e1, which is quite useful here. White has a pleasant choice: 11.c3 (or 11.a4 b4 12.♘fd2 as in the 1...b5-variation, but with an extra tempo) 11...0–0 12.a4 ♕b6 13.♕e2 bxa4 14.♖xa4 ♘c6 15.♗g5 and White has much better chances.

8.e5 ♘fd7 9.♘b3

The key move; White does not intend to go

for a closed French-type of position.

9...c5 10.dxc5 ♘xc5 11.♘xc5 ♗xc5

Now we get a position that will be examined in the 1...b5 line, but with the extra tempo ♖e1. In general this is not a big difference, but White can use the fact that his e5-pawn is protected to create some activity.

12.♘g5

The alternative is to play positional chess with 12.c3, as in line A.

12...♘c6 13.♕g4

White has a promising position, for instance:

13...g6 14.c3 ♕c7

Instead 14...d4 15.♕f4 followed by ♘e4 does not bring relief either.

15.♗f4

With an advantage for White.

b) 6...d5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.♘g5!

As usual, this is a very unpleasant move for Black. White is threatening ♘e6, so the best defence seems to be:

8...g6

The following example is quite thematic for this line:

9.♕g4 ♕e7 10.c3 ♘c6



11.♘xh7!

A neat tactical blow that leads to a favourable transformation for White.

11...♘dxe5 12.dxe5 ♖xh7 13.♗g5 ♕d7 14.♘d2 ♗e7 15.♘f3 0–0–0

And now instead of 16.b4 d4, White played the energetic move:

16.a4!

White was clearly better in Kislov – Chirpii, Ilichevsk 2007.

5...d6 6.♕e2 ♘d7

This is a slightly passive set-up. White has very comfortable play.

7.a4 b4 8.♘bd2 c5

After 8...♘gf6 9.e5 ♘d5 10.♘c4 White has the unpleasant idea of ♘a5.

This position was reached in Carstensen – Zapolskis, Frydek Mistek 2006.



9.d5N

This natural move secures White's advantage.

9...exd5

A better try would have been 9...e5, but even so after 10.a5 ♗e7 11.♘c4 ♘gf6 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 0–0 14.♗d2 White has a pleasant edge.

10.exd5† ♗e7 11.♘c4 ♘df6

Otherwise it is not so easy to deal with the threat of 12.♘xd6†.

12.♘e3 ♘h6

Another important line goes 12...♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♗xd5 14.♗xa6 ♘f6 15.♗b5† ♘d7 16.♖d1 ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 0–0 18.♗f4 ♘f6 19.♗c4± and White has a clear positional edge.

13.♖e1 0–0 14.♘c4 ♖e8 15.♗xh6 gxh6

16.♕d2! ♗f8 17.♖xe8 ♘xe8 18.♖e1

White has much better prospects due to his extremely strong knight and Black's weakened pawn structure.

6.c3 ♘f6

Clearly inferior is 6...♘c6, when White plays 7.d5 ♘a5 8.♖e1. Black's minor pieces on the queenside are poorly placed. 8...♘e7 (also clearly advantageous for White is 8...♘f6 9.b3 followed by 10.c4) 9.b4! cxb4 10.cxb4 ♘c4 11.♗xc4 bxc4 12.♕d4 ♖c8 13.♘a3± It is no wonder Black's opening experiment ended up in total disaster in Hoffmann – Lopatina, Bad Wiessee 2008.

7.♖e1 ♗e7

Again Black can try to close the position with:

7...d5 8.e5 ♘fd7

There is also 8...♘e4 when the following example is quite illustrative: 9.♘bd2 ♘xd2 10.♗xd2 ♘c6 11.dxc5! ♗xc5 12.♘g5 Again the same knight-jump is very strong: 12...♕c7 13.♕h5 g6 14.♕h3 0–0–0 Unfortunately for Black, castling long does not promise safety for the black king. 15.b4 ♗b6 16.♘f3 d4 This was Delchev – Chetverik, Cannes 2005, and now strong would be 17.c4 bxc4 18.♗xc4± when Black's king is in serious danger.

9.♘g5!

The usual thematic idea is as strong as ever.

9...g6

9...cxd4 loses at once to 10.♘xe6!.

10.♕g4 ♕e7 11.♘xh7 cxd4?

Black cracks under the pressure.

He should have played 11...♖xh7 12.♗g5 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♕d7 14.♘d2 ♘c6 15.♗c2 ♗g7 16.♘f3 when White would still enjoy a pleasant advantage.

12.♗g5 ♕c5

In Niebergall – Mo. Jovanovic, Munich 2006, White missed a nice shot:



13.♕xe6†!N ♗e7 14.♗xg6! and White has a winning attack.

8.e5 ♘d5 9.dxc5 ♗xc5

Black loses what appears to be a significant tempo with his bishop.

10.♘bd2 f5

Relatively the best defence. After 10...♘c6 11.♘e4 ♗e7 12.a4 bxa4 13.♖xa4± White has a very promising position.

Instead of 12...bxa4, Black can deviate by trying 12...♕b6, but then White plays: 13.axb5 axb5 14.♖xa8† ♗xa8 15.♕e2! This creates problems for Black with defending the b5-pawn.

For instance, 15...♘a7 16.♘d4 and Black has a difficult choice, either to give up his b5-pawn or to lose the opportunity to castle after 16...b4 17.♕g4.

Or 15...b4 16.c4 ♘c7 17.♘d6† ♗xd6 18.exd6 ♘a6 19.♘g5! ♘d8 20.♗f4, with a big advantage.

11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♘b3 ♗e7

This position happened in the game Sadvakasov – Tatai, Saint Vincent 1999. I worked out the following natural improvement:

13.♗g5N 0–0

13...♘c6 leads to serious problems for Black after 14.♕c2.

14.♘e5 ♕c7

The key point of my idea that Black cannot play 14...♘c6? in view of 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♘xd7! and the knight is untouchable because of the idea of ♗xh7.

15.♕c2

Black faces serious problems, as there is no comfortable way to defend the h7-pawn, for instance:

15...h6 16.♘g6 ♖e8 17.♘xe7† ♖xe7 18.♗h4±

White achieves a big advantage, due to his bishop pair and much better pieces.

C) 1...c6 2.c4 b5

A very rarely played move, which I do not rate highly, but White should still know something about it. Australian Grandmaster Ian Rogers wrote an article on it in *SOS 5*, calling it the Malinoise Defence, named after the city of Malines in Belgium (Malines is the French name of the city of Mechelen). Rogers tells a story about Dautov deciding after long thought not to allow this opening and answered 1...c6 with 2.♘f3 ♘f6 and then after more thought, 3.♗f4. We shall be a bit braver in this chapter.

3.cxb5 cxb5 4.e4

The position slightly resembles the line with 1...b5, but here we have the same position without c-pawns.

4...♗b7

4...♘f6 usually transposes to the same position after 5.♗d3 ♗b7 6.♘d2.

5.♘d2

To me this is the most logical move. If the b1-knight moved to c3 instead of d2 it would be harassed by Black's b-pawn. We also have to avoid the trap 5.♗xb5 ♗xe4 6.♘f3 ♗xb1, winning a piece. Finally, 5.♗d3 makes less sense here, as I want to put pressure on the b-pawn immediately.

5...a6

This is Black's best option and leads to worse but quite playable positions. The alternatives are weaker:

5...♕b6 6.♘gf3 e6 7.♗d3

Now the natural 7...♘f6 would transpose to a position that will be examined in the 5...♘f6 variation.

7...♘c6

This is met strongly by the following thematic idea:

8.d5 ♘b4 9.♗b1 exd5

9...♘f6 10.0–0 would again transpose to the 5...♘f6 line.



10.0–0!

White has excellent compensation for the pawn, as Black has serious problems developing his kingside. The following line illustrates this well:

10...♗e7 11.a3 ♘a6 12.e5 ♘h6 13.♘b3

White has much better chances.

5...♘f6 6.♗d3 e6

If 6...♕b6 7.♘gf3 e6 (7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘b4 9.♗b1 e6 is just the same) 8.0–0 (8.♕e2 is rather harmless for Black after 8...♘c6 9.♘b3 ♗b4†!) 8...♘c6 9.d5 ♘b4 10.♗b1

we reach a position we will examine in the 6...e6 line.

7.♘gf3 ♕b6

Obviously it would be much wiser for Black to refrain from such early activity and instead play the quiet 7...a6, which would take us to the other main line of the variation.

8.0–0 ♘c6 9.d5!

This thematic idea is very strong in almost every position.

9...♘b4

Nobody has ever played 9...exd5 and indeed after 10.e5 ♘g4 11.♕e2! Black will soon face serious difficulties.

10.♗b1 exd5 11.e5 ♘e4 12.a3 ♘xd2

Also 12...♘a6 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♘g5! does not bring Black relief. White will regain a pawn, retaining much better chances, for instance 14...♘c5 15.♗a2! ♘e6 16.♗e3 ♕d8 17.♗d5±.

13.♕xd2 ♘a6 14.♕f4!

A nice multipurpose move; White not only creates the threat of ♘g5, but also intends to develop his dark-squared bishop comfortably on e3.

14...h6

Black was concerned about ♘g5 and indeed after 14...♘c5 it is very strong: 15.♘g5! f6 16.exf6 ♕xf6 17.♖e1† ♗e7 18.♗xh7! Black's problem is that he cannot even castle long, due to the line 18...0–0–0 19.♘f7 ♖xh7 20.♖xe7! with a winning position.



15.♗e3!N

An obvious improvement over 15.b4 ♘c7 16.♗e3 ♘e6, which gave Black a defensible position in Molzahn – Schwab, St Veit 2002.

15...♘c5

After 15...♗c5 16.♘d4 0–0 17.♘f5! White has a massive attack.

16.♕g4±

With an obvious edge for White.

6.♘gf3 ♘f6 7.♗d3 e6 8.0–0 ♗e7

Again 8...♘c6 is quite risky in view of 9.d5! exd5 10.♖e1 with a very attractive position for White. Certainly Black cannot afford to play 10...dxe4? 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 ♗e7 13.♗g5 f6 14.♗f4 when White's advantage is already decisive.

9.♖e1

Instead 9.a4 looks quite natural, but after 9...♕b6! Black has a decent game. Incidentally, Rogers considers only 9.a4 and 9.♕e2, giving the latter an exclam.

9...0–0

9...d6 is met strongly by:



10.a4!N with the following point: 10...bxa4 11.♕xa4† ♘bd7 12.♘b3 and White's knight is heading for a5, where it will put a lot of pressure on Black's queenside.

9...d5



This move is entirely in the spirit of this system. However, this also shows just what is wrong with the black position.

10.e5 ♘fd7 11.♘b3!

This move makes the most sense to me.

11.b3 is recommended by Rogers with the queen on e2 instead of the rook on e1. Although White is probably better after this move too, I do not think it makes sense to weaken the c3-square and (presumably) put the bishop on the passive b2-square, out of respect for the ...♘d7-b6-c4 manoeuvre.

11...♘c6 12.♗e3±

White is a little better. He will play ♘b3-c1-e2-f4, as in the 3...♘c6-line of the French Tarrasch. From f4 the knight is threatening to go to h5, from where it will provide White with interesting attacking options, or simply be proud to make ...f7-f6 unfeasible. It should be added that ...♗b4 is not too attractive. White is not necessarily unhappy about playing ♗d2, but even if he has to play ♖e2 or ♖f1, the bishop will only appear to be active on b4, but in reality it will be missed on the kingside, where White will consider both ♗xh7† and ♘g5.

10.a3 d6 11.♘f1

Certainly White can develop his bishop to b2, by means of 11.b3 ♘bd7 12.♗b2, but Black seems to be okay in this type of position after 12...♕b6 13.♕e2 ♖ac8.

11...♘bd7 12.♘g3 ♖e8



13.♗d2±

This was Podkriznik – Svensek, Rogla 2002. Undoubtedly this is a quite playable position for Black, but on the other hand White can be satisfied with the results of the opening: he has a clear space advantage and every chance of generating some activity on the kingside, either by playing e4-e5 at a suitable moment, or by pushing the h-pawn.

D) 1...b6

This continuation is not as bad as it looks. The strong French GM Christian Bauer published a whole book on 1...b6 and lent some respectability to this move.

2.e4

White should not miss the opportunity to build a strong centre.

2...♗b7 3.♗d3 ♘f6

White should be familiar with Black's other options:

3...e6 is one of the main moves when play should transpose to our main line after 4.♘e2 c5, or (4...♘f6 5.♘d2 c5 6.c3) 5.c3 ♘f6 6.♘d2.

3...f5?

This lunge does not work in view of the following line:



4.exf5 ♗xg2 5.♕h5† g6 6.fxg6 ♗g7

The only move as 6...♘f6?? leads to a nice mate: 7.gxh7† ♘xh5 8.♗g6#

7.gxh7† ♔f8 8.♘f3 ♘f6

Again the only move. 8...♗xh1? leads to a hopeless position after 9.♘e5! ♗xe5 10.dxe5.

9.♕g6 ♗xf3

9...♗xh1? loses to 10.♗h6 ♖xh7 11.♘g5 and Black will quickly be mated.

10.♖g1 ♖xh7



11.♕g3!

The key move in this line; White regains the piece and remains a pawn up with a clearly better position.

11...♗e4 12.♗xe4 ♘xe4 13.♕f3† ♘f6

Black's position is hopeless after 13...♔g8 14.♕xe4 c6 15.♗f4 ♕f8 16.♗e5 d5, as in S.H. Jensen – Thestrup, Helsingor 2008, as the simple 17.♕e3N ♕f5 18.♘d2 is winning for White.

14.♕xa8 ♖xh2 15.♗f4 ♖h4 16.♕g2 ♖g4

This was Dallmann – Ewald, Leipzig 1996, and after:

17.♕h2+–

White remains an exchange up with an easily winning position.

3...g6

Black opts for a double fianchetto and most probably a set-up with his knights on e7 and d7, a system which some call the Hippo. I recommend the following idea:

4.c4!?



Not a popular move in this position, but in my opinion quite logical, as White takes the opportunity to seize more space in the centre.

4...♗g7 5.♘e2

This is more flexible than 5.♘f3.

5...♘c6 6.♗e3 ♘b4

Black exchanges his knight for White's light-squared bishop as otherwise his knight would simply be misplaced on c6.

7.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 8.♕xd3 e6 9.0–0–0 d6

In Najer – Blatny, Pardubice (rapid) 2007, White's space advantage was obvious, but Black has a fairly sound position. I recommend that White vary from the game with the following suggestion:

10.h4N

The game saw 10.f4 ♘e7 11.g4 h5 12.g5 and now the well-timed 12...d5! would have offered Black fine play, as he gains control over more squares in the centre.

10...♘f6 11.f3 h5

Otherwise White would grab more space with g2-g4.

12.♔b1 ♕d7 13.♕c2!?

Black has to solve an unpleasant dilemma with his king. If Black castles short he would Black obviously face a Sämisch-style attack, while 13...0–0–0 runs into the unpleasant 14.e5.

4.♘d2

White can also defend the e4-pawn with 4.♕e2 or 4.♘c3, but I prefer the text.

4...e6 5.♘e2!?

It is true that in most cases White develops his knight to f3, but I find the text move quite interesting. First of all, White keeps the option of advancing the f-pawn in many lines and, secondly, if Black decides to go for a closed type of position (by playing at some moment ...d6-d5, e4-e5 ...♘fd7) White would enjoy a more comfortable set-up with the knight on e2 compared with on f3. I decided to concentrate on Black's two main options:

5...c5

The alternative is:

5...d5 6.e5



And here we shall consider two options:

a) 6...♘e4 7.c3 ♘d7

If 7...c5 then after 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♗c2 Black's e4-pawn is very vulnerable.

8.♘g3

There is also nothing wrong with 8.0–0 ♘xd2 9.♗xd2 c5 10.♘f4 g6 11.♕g4±.

White could instead have tried 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♗c2, but Black could avoid this option by playing ...♘xd2 on the previous move.

8...♘xd2 9.♗xd2 c5 10.0–0 ♖c8

So far we have followed the game Lelumees – Siempos, Patras 1999. Now a natural-looking continuation is:

11.♕g4N g6 12.♗g5 ♕c7

Or 12...♗e7 13.♗h6!.

13.h4

This leads to a position that is much like a very favourable French Defence for White.

b) 6...♘fd7 7.0–0 c5 8.c3 ♘c6

8...g6 makes Black's dark squares vulnerable, which was exploited neatly in the following encounter: 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♗h6! ♗a6 11.c4! With the black king stuck in the centre, it is correct to open up the play. 11...♗xc4 12.♗xc4 dxc4 13.d5 White was clearly better in Poluljahov – Shevchenko, Polanica Zdroj 1999.

9.f4

This is a reasonable plan, but the immediate 9.♘f3 is quite good as well, for instance: 9...♗e7 10.a3 A prophylactic move that secures White from a possible ...♘b4-jump after exchanging on d4. 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖c8 12.b4 0–0 13.♘f4 ♖e8 14.g3 Now White has gained a lot of space on the kingside and can easily seize the initiative there. 14...g6 15.h4 ♗f8 16.h5 ♗g7 17.♖e1 White had the better prospects in Korneev – Triquell, Badalona 1994.

9...g6 10.♘f3 ♗g7

10...♕c7 is well met with 11.♗e3.

11.g4

Obviously White's plan is to push f4-f5. Black should have tried to castle long, but instead in the game he entered the battle in the centre, which naturally ended in White's favour:

11...f5 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13.f5! e5 14.dxe5

Simple, although it should be said that 14.g5 ♗e7 15.f6± was good enough as well.

14...♘cxe5 15.♘f4 d4 16.♘e6 ♕e7 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♕e2!

Black ended up in a lost position in Browne – Kueluer, Skopje 1972.

6.c3 ♘c6

Black's first choice according to theory, but he has additional options as well:

6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘c6 8.a3 ♗e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.b4! This is probably White's best set-up. 10...d6 11.♗b2 ♖c8 12.♘g3 White prepares to advance his f-pawn, which should give him serious attacking chances. 12...♘d7 13.f4 g6 14.♕g4 ♘f6 15.♕h3 White enjoyed the better prospects in Ermenkov – Sahovic, Jurmala 1978.

6...d6 7.0–0 ♗e7

White now has two equally strong options.

8.f4

Or 8.♘g3 ♘c6 9.♘f3 cxd4 10.cxd4 0–0 as in Beshukov – Turikov, St Petersburg 2001, and now simply 11.♗d2 ♖c8 12.♕e2± and White has better chances, thanks to his space advantage.

8...♘bd7 9.e5

Less convincing is 9.f5 exf5 10.♖xf5 0–0 11.♘g3 ♖e8 with an unclear position.

9...♘d5 10.♘e4 ♕c7 11.a3 ♕c6?

An obvious mistake, as Black certainly should have played 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 0–0, although after 13.♗d2 White has a promising position.

12.c4 ♘c7 13.b4!±

Black faces serious problems due to his misplaced queen, S. Krug – S. Lang, Bavaria 2001.



7.0–0 ♗e7

Black has various other possibilities that we should consider:

7...♕c7 8.a3

It is essential to cover the b4-square, as if 8.♘f3 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘b4 10.♗f4 ♕d8 White has to give up his light-squared bishop.

8...d6!?N

Surprisingly, this move has never been tested in practice, but the position is quite thematic and that is why I decided to examine this line. I should also mention three alternatives:

a) 8...h5?! This just weakens the g5-square, while Black fails to gain any activity on the kingside. 9.♘f3 d6 10.♗g5 ♗e7 This was played in Luther – Scherer, Altenkirchen 2005, and now with 11.♘f4! White could have secured his advantage and proved Black's set-up was a failure.

b) Also unsuccessful is 8...g6?! 9.e5! ♘h5 10.♘e4 ♗e7 as in Beliavsky – Basman, Hastings 1974. Now the straightforward 11.g4! ♘g7 12.♘f6† ♔d8 13.♗h6 would leave Black with a poor position.

c) Also not so good is 8...♗e7 as after 9.e5 Black cannot play 9...♘d5? in view of 10.c4 and Black's knight is trapped in the centre.

9.f4

Again White has an alternative way of arranging his pieces without moving the f-pawn: 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♘g3 0–0 11.♗f4 With a complicated battle, but White will obviously enjoy his space advantage.

9...♗e7 10.e5 ♘d5 11.♘f3 cxd4 12.cxd4 0–0

We have reached a very complex middlegame where White's chances are preferable, thanks to his extra space. The following is an illustrative line:

13.♗d2 ♖ac8 14.♖c1 ♕b8 15.b4

Preventing possible counterplay with ...♘a5.

15...a5

After 15...♖fd8 16.♕e1 White would build a dangerous initiative on the kingside.

16.b5 ♘a7 17.♕b3

White retains the better chances.

An interesting attempt is:

7...cxd4 8.cxd4 ♘b4 9.♗b1 ♗a6 10.♘f3 d5

This position occurred in Schneider – Karlsson, Stockholm 1978. Now I improved on White's play with:

11.a3N ♘c6

After 11...dxe4 12.♘e5! ♗xe2 13.♕xe2 ♘d3 (or even worse: 13...♘bd5 14.♕b5† ♘d7 15.♗xe4 with a clear advantage) 14.♘xd3 exd3 15.♗xd3 Black is unable to run away with his king and after 15...♗d6 16.♗b5† ♔e7 17.♗d2 White is clearly better.

12.e5 ♘d7 13.♖e1

I like the idea of keeping the light-squared bishops on the board, since after 13.♗d3 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 ♗e7 15.♗d2 ♘a5! White's advantage is rather minimal.

13...♗e7 14.♗e3 ♘a5

Obviously Black should try to generate activity on the queenside.

15.♘c3 ♘c4

White is also better after 15...♖c8 16.♘d2 0–0 17.♕g4.

16.♗c1 ♖c8 17.♗d3 b5 18.♘e2

White has managed to neutralize Black's play on the queenside and has the better chances, as he can easily develop an initiative on the kingside.

8.a3

White should take control over the b4-square, as after 8.♘f3 Black answers with 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘b4! and White has to give up his light-squared bishop.

8...d6

Now I have another novelty:



9.♘f3N

I definitely prefer this move, as the alternative 9.f4 cxd4 10.cxd4 0–0 looks pretty double-edged. For instance: 11.♘f3 (if 11.b3 then 11...b5! 12.♗b2 ♕b6 and Black has a decent game) 11...d5 12.e5 ♘e4 13.♘g3 ♘a5! Black had good play in Fink Nunn – Dragasevic Georgieva, Dortmund 1988. The main point is that after 14.♖e1 Black can leave her knight on e4 and sacrifice a pawn with 14...♖c8.

9...0–0 10.♘g3

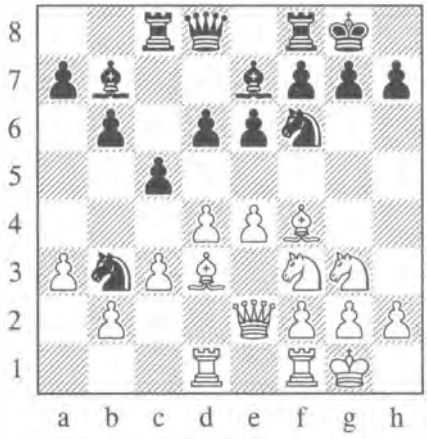
In my opinion this kind of position is slightly favourable for White, due to the space

advantage. The following continuation is quite logical:

10...♖c8 11.♕e2

Also worthy of consideration is 11.b4 ♕c7 12.♕e2!?.

11...♘a5 12.♗f4 ♘b3 13.♖ad1±



White has the better prospects.

Conclusion:

Even though the openings covered in this chapter are not Black's main lines, the reader should not overestimate White's likely advantage. The main difference compared with normal openings is just the ease with which White obtains an edge with natural moves. The main benefit this chapter offers is collecting all the relevant material (plus of course some improvements) so you do not need to waste time choosing between many promising possibilities.



Minor Systems



English Defence

Variation Index

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6

3.e4 ♗b7 4.♗d3

A) 4...♘f6 557
B) 4...♗b4† 558
C) 4...♘c6 560
D) 4...f5 5.exf5 565
D1) 5...♗xg2?! 565
D2) 5...♗b4† 6.♔f1 567
D21) 6...exf5 568
D22) 6...♘f6 568

D1) note to 11...♘c6



16.♖d1!N

D22) note to 7...♗d6



10.fxe6!N

D22) after 13...axb6



14.♗c2!?N

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6

This opening is called various names by various sources, but probably should be named the English Defence in tribute to the efforts of players such as Miles, Stean and Keene. The name Owen's Defence is usually reserved for the moves 1.e4 e6 2.d4 b6 (Owen was also English – apart from "his" opening, he is best remembered for losing a match 6-1 to Morphy, despite receiving the odds of a pawn and the move). In Owen's Defence it is also common to play 3.c4 later, but systems with ♗d3 and c2-c3 seem to give Black a hard life. Unfortunately, we do not have this option, as after 1.d4 e6 2.e4 we would be well outside our repertoire if our opponent tricked us with 2...d5!.

3.e4

It is clear that this is the most ambitious and principled continuation. Instead White players often prefer to avoid a theoretical discussion of the English, and continue instead with 3.♘c3, or 3.♘f3 which will frequently transpose to the Queen's Indian Defence. Also fashionable recently is 3.a3, which I played several times a few years ago.

3...♗b7 4.♗d3

Now Black must make a significant choice between: **A) 4...♘f6, B) 4...♗b4†, C) 4...♘c6** and the main move, **D) 4...f5**.

A) 4...♘f6

This move is not especially popular, but it is important for White to know how to react.

5.f3

Among the many possibilities, the text move seems best to me.

5...♗b4†

Black also has the following couple of options:

5...c5 6.d5 exd5 7.cxd5 d6

We reach a Benoni-type position, which in my opinion favours White, due to Black's misplaced light-squared bishop.

8.♘e2

I can also recommend the following set-up: 8.♘c3 g6 9.♘h3 ♗g7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗g5

8...g6 9.♘bc3 a6 10.a4 ♗g7

This is Blaas – Wach, Austria 2004, and now White should play:



11.♗g5!N 0–0 12.0–0 ♘bd7 13.f4

With a promising position for White; the bishop does not belong on b7 in Benoni-style positions, as it is suffocated by White's centre.

5...d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.f4

White advances his f-pawn for the second time in the opening, but this allows him to establish better control over the centre.

8...c5 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.0–0 ♗e7

I also analysed 10...cxd4 11.a3 a5. The inclusion of a2-a3 and ...a7-a5 favours White, as it slightly weakens Black's queenside (however 11...♗e7 12.b4 0–0 13.♗b2 also gives White pleasant play). 12.♖e1 Due to the threat of 13.e6 Black is forced to develop his bishop to e7: 12...♗e7 13.♗b5 0–0 14.♗xc6 ♗xc6 15.♘xd4 ♗b7 16.♘c3± White enjoys a stable edge, thanks to his better pawn structure.

11.♘c3!?

Also interesting is :11.♗e3 0–0 12.♘c3 cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♘c5 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.♗e2±

11...♘xd4 12.♘xd4 cxd4 13.♘b5 0–0 14.♘xd4 ♘c5

This is Vu Dinh Hung – Nguyen Vu Son, Vietnam (ch) 2001. Now White could have claimed an edge by playing simple chess:

15.♗e3±N

6.♗d2 ♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 ♘c6 8.♘e2 ♕e7 9.♘bc3

The defining feature of the position is White's extra space.

9...d6 10.a3!? ♘a5 11.♕c2 0–0 12.0–0

White was better in Gil Matilla – Gomez Castilla, Valladolid 1978.

B) 4...♗b4† 5.♗d2 ♗xd2†

A serious alternative is:

5...♕e7

Now I recommend a flexible move:

6.♘e2

Black now has a couple of options:



a) 6...f5?!

White is ready to refute this lunge.

7.exf5 ♗xg2 8.♖g1 ♗f3

After 8...♗b7, as in Vasiliev – Lempert, Moscow 1990, White can play the simple: 9.fxe6! ♗xd2† (Black cannot recapture with the pawn: 9...dxe6 10.♕a4†! ♘c6 11.♗e4 ♗xd2† 12.♘xd2 ♕d7 13.♖xg7!+–) 10.♘xd2 dxe6 11.♘f4 ♘f6 12.♕e2 White is unquestionably better.

9.♖g3!

An important resource, since after 9.fxe6 Black has the interesting move 9...♗d6!, with counter-chances.

9...♗b7

Somewhat better would have been 9...♗xe2, but even so after 10.♕xe2 ♘c6 11.fxe6 ♗xd2† 12.♘xd2 ♘xd4 13.exd7† ♔xd7 14.♕xe7† ♘xe7 15.♖xg7 White has an extra pawn.

10.fxe6 ♘f6? 11.exd7† ♘bxd7 12.♖e3

White was already winning in Chuhachev – S. Frolov, Vladivostok 2008.

b) 6...♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 ♘h6

After 7...♘f6 White should not rush with 8.e5 ♘e4 9.♕c2 f5!, but instead just continue with 8.♘bc3.

8.♘bc3 0–0 9.0–0 d6

This leads to a passive position for Black. More ambitious was 9...f5, though after 10.d5 White still has the better chances.

10.f4 ♘d7

Now it is too late for 10...f5, as after 11.exf5 ♘xf5 12.d5!± Black faces serious difficulties.

11.d5! e5 12.f5 f6

It is important that Black has no time for 12...♘c5? due to 13.f6!+–.

13.b4 ♘f7



14.♗c2!±

The idea is to activate the bishop via the

a4-square. White has a stable edge, thanks to his huge space advantage. In the game Avrukh – Speelman, Elista (ol) 1998, I eventually won a nice positional game, which proved decisive in our match against England.

I would also like to mention the following idea: 5...♘c6 6.♘f3 ♕f6

This move is rather dubious, as we shall see. If instead 6...♗xd2† then 7.♕xd2! and White intends to drive away the c6-knight with d4-d5. It is not easy to deal with this idea. The only game to test this position continued: 7...♘ge7 (perhaps slightly better is 7...♕f6, but after 8.d5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 ♕xd4 10.♘c3± White is threatening 11.♘b5) 8.d5 ♘b8 9.♘c3± Black had to accept the failure of his opening strategy in Yeremenko – Poliakov, Kharkov 2004.



7.d5!

This is much stronger than 7.e5 ♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♕h6 with double-edged play, H. Olafsson – Speelman, Internet (blitz) 2000.

7...♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♘ce7

After 8...♘e5 9.♘xe5 ♕xe5 10.♘c3 White is also much better, as he is threatening the unpleasant 11.f4.

9.♘c3 a6

A sad necessity, as otherwise it was not so easy to handle White's intended 10.♘b5.

10.0–0

It was obvious Black's experiment had failed in Dautov – Speelman, Lippstadt 2000.

6.♘xd2!

This time it is necessary to recapture with the knight, since 6.♕xd2 f5! gives Black reasonable play. For instance: 7.♘c3 fxe4 8.♗xe4 ♗xe4 9.♘xe4 ♘f6 10.♕e3 0–0 11.♘f3 ♘c6 12.0–0 ♘xe4 13.♕xe4 ♕f6 14.♖ad1 ♕f5! Black had nothing to worry about in Goldwaser – Dolezal, Buenos Aires 2006.

6...f5

The text move is the most ambitious continuation, but Black also has a couple of alternatives:

6...♘h6 7.♘gf3 0–0 8.0–0 f6 This is a solid but rather passive approach. Now or on the previous move Black could have played ...f7-f5, which would just transpose to the main 6...f5-variation. 9.b4 Probably White has several other ways of retaining his advantage, but the text looks most logical to me. 9...♘c6 This was Kishnev – Bischoff, Germany 2001, and now I like the following flexible move: 10.a3!?N ♘e7 11.c5 ♘f7 12.♕c2 White has better chances, thanks to his obvious space advantage.

Black can attempt to weaken the light squares in White's camp with: 6...♘c6 7.♘gf3 ♕f6 8.e5 ♕f4 9.g3 ♕h6 This is Elsness – Conquest, Novi Sad 2009, but Black's plan fails to achieve its goal after 10.0–0 ♘ge7 and now White should have played: 11.♗e4 ♕h5 (if 11...0–0 then 12.d5!± is very strong) 12.b4 0–0 13.♖c1 White keeps his usual space advantage.

7.♘gf3 ♘h6

White's task is much easier if Black releases the tension:

7...fxe4 8.♘xe4 ♘f6 9.♕c2 ♘a6

Alternatively Black could try: 9...♘c6 10.a3 ♘e7 11.d5! (a strong idea although White is also better after the normal 11.0–0 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 ♗xe4 13.♕xe4 0–0 14.♘e5±).

11...♘f5?! (the critical line is 11...exd5 12.♘xf6† gxf6 13.0–0–0!⩲ when White has great play for the pawn) 12.dxe6 (12.0–0–0!N was even stronger) 12...dxe6 13.0–0–0 White was much better in Olarasu – Jicman, Romania 2004.

10.a3 ♘xe4 11.♗xe4 ♗xe4 12.♕xe4 0–0 13.0–0

White's chances are clearly preferable, due to the difference in strength between the knights, with Black's clearly struggling to find a decent square.

13...c6 14.♘e5 ♘c7 15.♖ad1 ♕e7 16.♖fe1 ♖ad8 17.♖e3

White developed a strong initiative in F. Schlamp – C. Ross, Germany 1999.

8.0–0 0–0



Six games have reached this position, but none of White's efforts looked convincing to me, so I developed a new plan.

9.♖e1!?N ♘c6 10.♕a4!

It is important to take aim at the d7-pawn.

10...♕f6

Another idea for Black is to transfer his knight to g6:

10...♘e7 11.♖ad1 ♘g6

In this case White's central strategy promises him better chances after:

12.d5 ♘f4 13.♗f1 fxe4 14.♘xe4 exd5 15.cxd5 ♔h8

Black can hardly capture the d5-pawn:

15...♗xd5? 16.g3 ♗xe4 17.♖xe4 followed by 18.♖d7.

Or 15...♘xd5 16.♗c4 c6 17.♘d6 ♕c7 18.♘xb7 ♕xb7 19.♖e5±.

16.d6

White retains the better chances.

11.d5 ♘e5 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.♘f3 ♕xb2 14.♖ab1

After the inaccurate 14.♕xd7 ♘g4 Black has counterplay.

14...♕c3 15.♖b3 ♕f6 16.♕xd7 fxe4 17.♗xe4 exd5 18.cxd5 ♖f7 19.♕e6!

White keeps definite pressure, due to his better mobilized pieces.

C) 4...♘c6 5.♘e2



5...♘b4

Giving up bishop for knight is the price White must pay for grabbing so much space in the centre, but it is worth it.

Much less popular is:

5...g6

White should now develop naturally:

6.♘bc3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 ♘ge7

Here I like the following example:

8.♕d2!?

Instead 8.0–0 has been played in most of the games.

8...d5

Black naturally avoids 8...0–0 9.♗h6! when White would have chances of generating a kingside attack.

9.cxd5 exd5 10.e5 0–0 11.0–0 ♘b4?!

This plan is mistaken, so instead Black should continue 11...f6, although in this case after 12.f4 White's chances are still preferable.

12.♗b1 c5 13.f4 cxd4 14.♘xd4 ♖c8



This position was reached in Bareev – Bauer, Ajaccio (blitz) 2007. Now White could have gained a solid advantage with the simple:

15.♘cb5!?N ♘bc6 16.♘d6±

I recently faced an unusual alternative:

5...♗b4† 6.♗d2

Black came up with a rather strange idea:

6...♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 ♕f6

Trying to provoke e4-e5, which would activate Black's bishop.

8.♗c2!

A flexible move, and now the queen is obviously misplaced on f6. In the game Black tried unsuccessfully to justify his idea.

8...♕h6 9.f4 ♕h4† 10.g3 ♕h5 11.d5! ♘ce7 12.♘bc3 ♘h6 13.0–0–0±

Black had a horrible position in Avrukh – Bischoff, Zurich 2009.

6.♘bc3 ♘xd3† 7.♕xd3 ♘e7

Black has three other moves we should consider:

7...d6 8.0–0 ♘f6

8...♘e7 transposes to 7...♘e7.

9.d5 ♗e7

Now the following idea appeals to me:



10.♕g3!?N

A rapid game between high-level players continued: 10.♘d4 ♕d7 11.a4 c5 12.dxc6 ♗xc6 13.b3 0–0 14.♗a3 ♗b7 Black had decent play in Kramnik – Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2002.

10...0–0

Obviously Black cannot play 10...♘h5? in view of 11.♕h3 and White wins a pawn.

11.♗h6 ♘e8 12.♗e3

I really like White's position. He has easy play with good attacking prospects, while Black's position, although sound, is rather passive. Let's see a sample line:

12...e5 13.f4 exf4 14.♗xf4 ♗f6 15.♖ad1

Followed by 16.♘d4, when White has better chances.

7...♗b4 8.0–0 ♘e7

The alternative is 8...♗xc3 9.♘xc3 ♘e7 when I like the following plan: 10.d5! This advance restricts both Black's minor pieces. 10...d6 (Perhaps better would be 10...♘g6 11.f4 0–0, but in this case White should

slowly improve his position with: 12.♗d2 [there is no point hurrying with 12.f5 as after 12...exf5 13.exf5 ♘e5 14.♕g3 f6 Black has a sound position] 12...d6 [or 12...♕e7 13.♖ae1] 13.♕g3 White keeps good attacking chances.) 11.f4 ♕d7 12.f5! exf5 13.exf5 0–0–0 This is Gual Pascual – Teran Alvarez, Cala Galdana 1999, and now the simple 14.a4N 14...a5 15.♘b5! followed by b2-b4, would give White a powerful attack.



9.♘d1!

A remarkable move; White is not only threatening to trap Black's dark-squared bishop, but is also transferring his knight to e3, where it will significantly help White's play on the kingside.

9...♘g6

I do not see much point for Black in playing 9...f5 10.f3.

10.f4

Now White intends 11.f5.

10...f5

Black cannot play 10...0–0 11.f5 exf5 12.exf5 ♘h4 13.g3 as he loses his knight.

11.exf5 exf5 12.♘g3

Not only attacking the f5-pawn, but also taking control of the e4-square.

12...0–0 13.c5!

Finally, White catches the dark-squared bishop:

13...a5 14.a3 ♗a6 15.♕b3† ♔h8 16.axb4 ♗xf1 17.♘xf1±

White was much better in Ehlvest – Kraai, Philadelphia 2003.

7...g6

Now I like the aggressive approach:

8.h4!?



Let's have a look at Black's options:

a) 8...h6 9.h5 g5 10.f4 gxf4 11.♗xf4 d6 12.0–0–0 ♕d7 13.d5 0–0–0

This position occurred in Bacrot – Short, Sarajevo 2000, and now I found a slight improvement on White's play:

14.♖hf1!N ♗g7

White's last move prevented 14...♘f6 in view of 15.♗xd6! ♗xd6 16.♖xf6 ♗e5 17.♖f2 and Black cannot hope for sufficient compensation with such a passive light-squared bishop.

15.♕g3 ♖h7

Also unsatisfactory for Black is 15...♗xc3 16.♘xc3 ♘e7 17.♕g7!±.

16.e5!

With a strong initiative.

b) 8...♘f6 9.e5 ♘h5 was played in Chatalbashev – Chernyshov, Zalakaros 2008. Now I believe White overlooked a strong blow: 10.d5!N d6 11.♗g5 (also interesting is 11.g4 ♘g7 12.♗f4!?) 11...♗e7 12.g4 ♘g7 13.exd6 cxd6 14.♗xe7 ♕xe7 15.0–0–0 Black's passive minor pieces make White's advantage obvious.

c) Black would not be happy if White managed to advance his h-pawn, so the most natural reaction is:

8...h5 9.♗g5 ♗e7



10.♕e3!?

I was surprised to discover that three games had continued with 10.d5. This temporary sacrifice is not at all clear: 10...♗xg5 11.hxg5 ♕xg5 12.♘b5 0–0–0 13.♘xa7† ♔b8 14.♘b5 ♘f6 With a complex battle.

10...d6

After 10...♘f6 11.f3 White has a very pleasant game due to his extra space.

11.0–0–0 ♕d7 12.f3 0–0–0 13.♘f4

White has better chances, for instance:

13...♗xg5 14.hxg5 ♘e7 15.♘d3±

8.0–0

In one recent game White selected the aggressive 8.h4, but Black reached a perfectly playable position after: 8...d5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.e5 ♕d7 11.h5 ♘c6 12.a3 f6 13.exf6 gxf6∞ Eljanov – Ponomariov, Kharkov 2009.

8...d6

I believe the alternatives are clearly worse:

8...g6 9.♕h3!

It is essential for White to exchange Black's dark-squared bishop.

9...♗g7 10.♗h6 0–0 11.♗xg7 ♔xg7

This is Kohlweyer – Gulko, Geneva 1997, and now White should have played:



12.d5!N

I really like advancing the d-pawn in this variation, as White at a stroke restricts both Black's minor pieces. White's chances are clearly preferable, for instance:

12...exd5 13.cxd5 f5 14.f3 ♗a6 15.♖ad1

With a positional edge.

8...d5

This looks very risky, as Black is lagging far behind in development.

9.exd5!N

This seems more logical than 9.cxd5, as was played in both games that reached the previous position.

9...exd5 10.♖e1!

This significantly complicates Black's attempts to castle short, while castling long would allow White to develop a dangerous offensive on the queenside.

10...♕d7

Another line goes 10...dxc4 11.♕xc4 ♕d7 12.♗f4 0–0–0 (or 12...♕c6 13.♕xc6† ♘xc6 14.♗xc7±) 13.♕xf7 ♘g6 14.♕xd7† ♖xd7 15.♗e3 and Black has insufficient compensation for the missing pawn.

11.c5! 0–0–0

After 11...♘g6 Black loses a pawn by force: 12.♘f4† ♗e7 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.cxb6! axb6 15.♗g5 f6 16.♕xg6†±

12.b4!

The black king's position is perilous.

9.d5 ♕d7

Clearly worse is: 9...e5?! 10.f4 exf4 11.♘xf4 ♕d7 12.♗e3 0–0–0?! 13.b4 (13.a4 was also very strong) 13...c5 14.bxc5 dxc5 15.a4 ♔b8 16.a5+– White developed a decisive attack in Dub – Jamrich, Budapest 2000.

10.f4 g6 11.♘d4 ♗g7

Black can also choose to commit his king immediately:

11...0–0–0

This was tried successfully by Nigel Short against Gelfand in Novgorod 1997. In fact Black's last move is risky and I believe White could pose serious problems after the following strong move:



12.a4!?N

Instead Gelfand played 12.b4?!.

After 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.♕h3 Short analysed 13...♗g7 and then 14.♘xe6 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♖de8∞ when Black has fantastic compensation for the pawn.

12...a5

Otherwise it is hard to imagine how Black can defend his king against the advance of the a4-pawn.

13.♘cb5

White has every chance of building a dangerous offensive, for instance:

13...♗g7 14.b4! exd5 15.exd5 c5 16.dxc6 ♘xc6 17.♘xc6 ♗xc6 18.♖a2 axb4 19.♗e3 ♔b7 20.a5 bxa5 21.♖xa5 ♖a8 22.♘a7!

White's attack is very strong, since Black has nothing to oppose the ♖b1-b4 manoeuvre.

12.f5!

This is stronger than 12.♗e3 0–0 13.f5, as in S. Savchenko – Koenig, Bad Woerishofen 2003, as then Black has the opportunity to play 13...♗xd4!N 14.♕xd4 e5 15.♕d3 f6 16.♗h6 ♖f7 reaching a defendable position.

12...gxf5

Now it is a different story and 12...♗xd4† 13.♕xd4 e5 does not solve Black's problems: 14.♕f2 gxf5 15.exf5 c6 16.♘e4 0–0–0 17.♘f6 ♕c7 18.♗h6!± Black cannot do much against the upcoming 19.♗g7, winning an exchange.

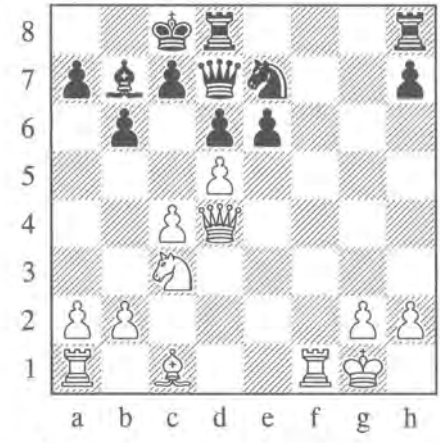
13.exf5 ♗xd4†

Or 13...♘xf5 14.♘xf5 exf5 15.♗g5 0–0 16.♖xf5 f6 17.♗e3 ♖ae8 18.♗d4± leads to an obvious positional advantage for White.

14.♕xd4 0–0–0 15.fxe6

Instead 15.♗g5 is well met by 15...♖hg8.

15...fxe6



16.♗g5!

This is the correct way to develop the initiative.

16...♖hg8

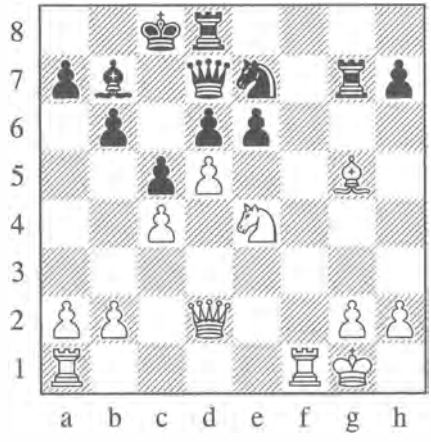
I also looked at 16...e5 17.♕d3 h6 when White is still in control after 18.♗d2 ♔b8 19.♖f7 ♖dg8 20.♖af1.

17.♘e4 c5?

A serious mistake, but Black was struggling even after the best defence: 17...♘f5 18.♕d2 ♖df8 19.♘f6 White wins an exchange due to the following line: 19...♕g7 20.♖ae1! ♖xf6 21.♗xf6 ♕xf6 22.♖xe6 ♕d4† (if 22...♕f7 23.♕c2 ♖g5 24.h3!+– and Black is defenceless against the threat of 25.g4) 23.♕xd4 ♘xd4 24.♖e7 ♔b8 25.♖ff7 With a clear advantage.

18.♕d2 ♖g7

In the game Miniboeck – Schroll, Austria 2004, White now missed an easy win:



19.♘f6!N ♕c7 20.♘h5! ♖g6 21.♖f7 ♖e8 22.♘g7+–

D) 4...f5

This move is definitely the reason why some players avoid playing the natural 3.e4 line with White.

5.exf5

Naturally White should not shrink from the challenge.

Now Black has a choice between **D1) 5...♗xg2?!** and **D2) 5...♗b4†**.

D1) 5...♗xg2?!

This move is correctly regarded as dubious by existing theory, but it is essential to be familiar with the following line:

6.♕h5† g6 7.fxg6 ♗g7

Obviously bad is 7...♘f6? 8.g7† ♘xh5 9.gxh8=♕+–.

8.gxh7† ♔f8 9.♗g5

Usually 9.♘e2 ♘f6 10.♕h4 ♗xh1 11.♗g5 leads to the same position.

9...♘f6

This is the only move, since 9...♘e7? loses to 10.♘f3! ♗xh1 11.♘e5 ♕e8 12.♘g6† ♘xg6 13.♗xg6 ♕c8 14.♕h4 and Black is helpless against the mating threats.

10.♕h4



10...♗xh1

An alternative is:

10...♘c6

This has actually scored well for Black; nevertheless, White has a great position:

11.♘e2 ♘b4

11...♗xh1 would just transpose to the 10...♗xh1 line.

12.♗g6 ♗xh1



This position was reached in Shumiakina – Matveeva, Russia 1998, and now it is not that difficult to find the following idea:

13.♘d2!N

White prevents ...♗f3 and prepares the decisive ♘e2-f4-h5. The best defence I managed to discover was:

13...♘c6

Instead 13...♗b7 loses neatly after: 14.♘f4 ♔e7 15.♘h5 ♕f8 16.d5! (threatening 17.♘e4) 16...exd5 (or 16...♘bxd5 17.♘e4+–) 17.0–0–0 White's attack is unstoppable, as ♖e1 is on the way.

Similarly hopeless is 13...♔e7 14.a3 ♘c6 15.0–0–0 ♗g2 16.♖g1+–.

14.0–0–0 ♘e7 15.♘f4 ♘xg6 16.♘xg6† ♔f7 17.♘xh8† ♕xh8 18.♖xh1 ♘xh7 19.♕h5† ♔g8 20.♗e3

White is simply a pawn up.

11.♘e2 ♘c6

Black has tested a couple of alternatives:

11...♕e7

This is simply too slow and allows White to unleash a powerful attack:

12.♘f4 ♕f7

Instead 12...♔e8, as in Elsness – Antoniou, Istanbul (ol) 2000, loses at once to 13.♘h5.

13.♘g6† ♔e8 14.♘e5 ♕f8

14...♕e7 would lose to 15.♘g4.

15.♘c3 d6 16.0–0–0 ♗b7

In the game Browne – Miles, Reno 1999, Black soon had a dreadful position after 16...dxe5 17.dxe5 ♔e7 18.♖xh1 ♘bd7. Now White played some strange moves (perhaps already in time trouble). After the simple 19.exf6† ♘xf6 (or 19...♗xf6 20.♖e1 c6 21.♘e4 ♗xg5† 22.♘xg5 and White wins) 20.♖e1 ♔d7 21.♗g6 Black would be doomed.

17.♗g6† ♔e7



18.♘d5†!!

White wins easily in every line.

18...♗xd5

Also losing is 18...exd5 19.♖e1 ♔d8 20.♘f7† ♔c8 21.♗xf6.

19.cxd5 dxe5 20.dxe5 ♘bd7 21.♕b4†! ♔d8

Or 21...♘c5 22.♕f4 winning.

22.♕xf8† ♖xf8 23.dxe6 ♔c8 24.exf6 ♘xf6 25.e7 ♖h8 26.♗xf6 ♗xf6 27.e8=♕† ♖xe8 28.♗xe8

White has a won position.

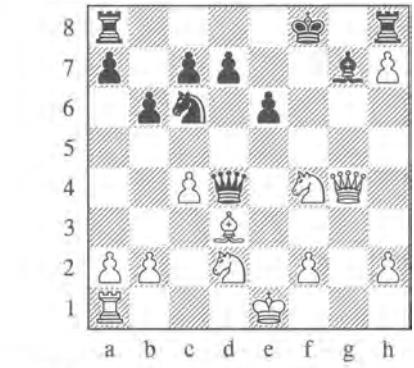
11...♗f3 12.♘f4 ♘c6 13.♘d2 ♗g4

Now the best way to proceed is:

14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.♕xg4 ♕xd4

The other capture is also losing: 15...♘xd4 16.♘g6† ♔e8 17.♘xh8 ♗xh8 18.♕g8† ♕f8 19.0–0–0 and White is completely winning.

The text move was played in Lower – D. Marshall, e-mail 1999. White's advantage is decisive after:



16.♖d1!N

A big improvement over 16.♘f3, as played in the game. After the text move Black's position falls apart. For example:

16...♗f6 17.♘g6† ♔f7 18.♗e4+–

The main threat is ♘f3.

12.♘d2 ♔f7

Black has three other moves we should consider:

12...♘b4 13.♗g6 ♗b7 14.♘f4 ♘c6 15.0–0–0 ♘xd4 This is Popovics – Babujian, Chalkidiki 2003, and now White could have won on the spot with 16.♘h5.

12...e5 13.0–0–0 e4 14.♗xe4 ♗xe4 15.♘xe4 ♖xh7 16.♕f4 White's attack is very dangerous, as shown in the following game: 16...♔f7 17.♘2c3! The most natural move and probably the strongest. 17...♖h5 18.h4± Black cannot do much against White's threat of ♘d5, Magerramov – Psakhis, Soviet Union 1980.

12...b5 Now White's initiative develops almost effortlessly. 13.♘f4 ♘xd4? This of course significantly eases White's task. (I also examined 13...bxc4 14.♘xc4 ♘xd4 15.♘g6† ♔e8 16.♕xd4 ♖xh7 17.♘ge5 ♖h3 18.0–0–0 ♗d5 19.♗g6† ♔f8 20.♕f4! d6 21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.♘d7†+–.) 14.♘g6† ♔f7 15.♘e5† ♔e8 16.♕xd4 White had a big advantage in Boor – Kraai, USA 2004.

13.f3!

A good positional decision; White traps the bishop on h1, intending to capture it after castling long.

13...♘b4 14.♗b1

Black has to deal with White's intended ♘f4, which will create many threats. Black failed to find an adequate defence in the following encounter:

14...c5 15.♘f4 d5 16.♗g6† ♔e7 17.♘h5 ♕f8

This is Santini – Nava, e-mail 2004, and now White has a simple solution:



18.♔f2N

This wins the trapped bishop, leaving Black with a hopeless position.

D2) 5...♗b4†

This is a more testing line for White than the dodgy pawn grab on g2 we have just looked at.

6.♔f1

Stepping out of the way, covering g2, and also leaving the b4-bishop as a potential target.

Black must now decide between **D21) 6...exf5** and **D22) 6...♘f6**.

D21) 6...exf5 7.c5!



7...bxc5

Black has no choice, as his bishop was trapped. For example, 7...♕f6? loses to 8.a3 ♗a5 9.b4 ♕xd4 10.♕e2† ♘e7 11.♗b2.

8.a3 c4

The alternative is hardly playable for Black: 8...♗a5 9.dxc5 ♕f6 Now I really like the following elegant idea: 10.♖a2! ♗d5 (instead 10...c6 does not help after 11.b4 ♗d8 12.♖e2† ♘e7 13.♗b2 ♕f7 14.♘f3± with a strong initiative) 11.♕e2† ♘e7 12.b4 ♗xa2 13.♕xa2 d5 14.bxa5 ♘d7 15.♘f3 ♖b8 16.♕c2± White's material advantage should tell, Mielke – Heusslein, Germany 1986.

9.♗xc4 ♗d6

The alternative is simply bad:

9...♗a5? 10.♕b3!

Attacking both the b7-bishop and the g8-knight.

10...♕e7

Now the simplest would be:

11.♘d2!N

In the game Krueger – Galicki, Hattingen 2005, Black gained some counterplay after 11.♘e2 ♕e4! 12.f3 ♕c6 13.♗xg8 d5, although White is still much better.

11...♗b6 12.♗xg8 ♘c6 13.♘gf3 0–0–0 14.♗d5 ♖he8 15.g3

Black is lost.

10.♕b3

White undoubtedly also keeps the initiative after 10.♘f3, but the text is more ambitious.

10...♗a6 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 12.♘f3

Certainly White has no intention of winning a pawn with 12.♕d3, since after 12...♕c8 13.♕xf5 ♘f6 14.♘f3 0–0⩱ Black has reasonable compensation, M. Johansson – Scholbach, e-mail 2000.

12...c6

In Summerscale – S. Williams, Britain (ch) 1998, Black did not manage to solve his king's problems: 12...♘f6 13.♘c3 c6 14.♗g5 ♕b6 15.♖e1† ♔d8 16.♗xf6† (also good enough was 16.♕xb6† axb6 17.♘h4, winning the f-pawn) 16...gxf6 17.♕c2 White is clearly better.

13.♘c3 ♕b6 14.♕c4 ♘c7 15.g3 ♕a6 16.♕xa6 ♘xa6 17.d5!

Black has managed to swap queens, but even so White's active pieces allow him to keep the initiative.

17...♘e7 18.dxc6 dxc6 19.♔g2 0–0 20.♖d1 ♖ad8

This is L. Christensen – L. Nielsen, Denmark 1992. Now White could have won a pawn with:

21.♗g5N ♖fe8 22.♗xe7 ♗xe7 23.♘d4!±

D22) 6...♘f6 7.a3!?

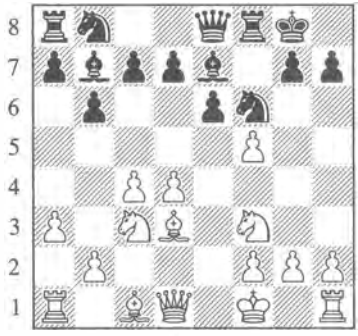
Not the most popular continuation, but in my opinion a very promising one. In the more popular lines Black has been doing fine, according to recent theory.

7...♗d6

Black can hardly hope for adequate compensation if he plays passively:

7...♗e7 8.♘c3 0–0 9.♘f3 ♕e8

Black has also tried 9...exf5 10.♗xf5 ♕e8, Holmsgaard – Nemitz, Porz 1990 (instead 10...d5? as in Moreno Trujillo – Zamarbide Ibarrea, Mondariz 2003, is not a serious option, as the simple 11.♘g5!N± would pose Black tough problems). I think White should continue developing normally: 11.♗e3N For example, 11...♕h5 12.♘g5! ♕xd1† 13.♖xd1 g6 14.♗e4 ♘xe4 15.♘gxe4 ♗a6 16.♘d2 leaves Black with insufficient compensation.



10.fxe6!N

This is obviously stronger than 10.♕e2 as in Beliavsky – Czebe, Hungary 1999, as now 10...exf5N 11.♗xf5 ♕h5 would give Black some play for the pawn.

10...dxe6 11.♕e2

Now very simple play gives White a large advantage. For example:

11...♗d6 12.♘g5! e5 13.d5 ♘bd7 14.♘e6 ♖f7 15.♗e3±

8.♘c3 0–0 9.♘f3 ♕e8

This is Black's main choice according to theory. There are also a couple of alternatives:

9...♘c6 10.♗g5 ♘e7

10...exf5 11.♗xf5 would transpose to the 9...exf5 10.♗xf5 ♘c6 variation.

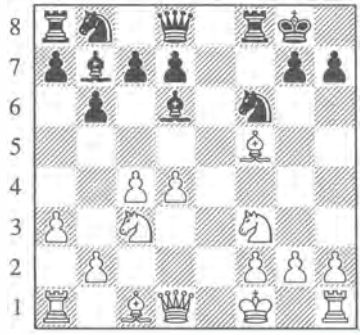
10...♕e8 allowed White to force favourable simplifications in Dautov – Filipovic, Switzerland 2004: 11.fxe6 dxe6 12.♗xf6! ♖xf6 13.♗e4 ♖d8 14.♕a4!±

11.fxe6 dxe6 12.♕e2 ♕d7 13.♖e1

White is clearly better, and the game Goldin – Gofshtein, Rishon LeZion 1998, was decided very quickly:

13...h6 14.♗xf6 ♖xf6 15.♘e4 ♖f4 16.c5!+–

9...exf5 10.♗xf5



Here we have a few possible options:

a) 10...♘c6 11.♗g5 ♕e8 12.♗xf6!? A fine positional move; White establishes control over the h1-a8 diagonal, which secures him against Black's tactical ideas. 12...♖xf6 13.♗e4 ♗a6 14.♕a4 ♗b7 15.♖e1± White was clearly better in Sherbakov – Volzhin, Poland 1999.

b) 10...♗xf3?! Black cannot hope for adequate compensation after giving up his light-squared bishop. 11.♕xf3 ♘c6 12.♗e3 g6 13.♗c2 ♔g7 14.g3 h5 15.♔g2 ♘g4 Now in Yermolinsky – Blatny, San Francisco 2000, the simple 16.♕e2 ♘xe3† (or 16...♕f6 17.♘e4) 17.fxe3± would have left White with a healthy extra pawn and a positional advantage.

c) 10...♕e8 11.♗e3 ♕h5 12.♘g5!

Without queens it will be hard for Black to rustle up compensation, as was shown in the following encounter:

12...h6 13.♗h7† ♔h8 14.♕xh5 ♘xh5

This is Jaworski – Kalinitschew, Poland 2006.



15.♗g6!N

An easy improvement over 15.♗e4, as played in the game.

15...♘f4

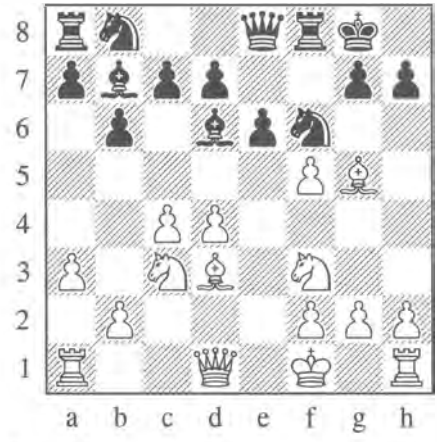
Or 15...hxg5 16.♗xh5 ♗f4 17.♔g1! with the idea of h2-h4.

16.♗xf4 ♗xf4 17.♘f7† ♔g8 18.♘e2 ♗d6 19.♘xd6 cxd6 20.d5

White has a strategically winning position.

10.♗g5

The most challenging continuation, as the endgame after 10.♕e2 exf5 11.♕xe8 ♘xe8 is very playable for Black.



10...exf5

The alternative is:

10...♕h5 11.d5

This move is positionally well motivated, but I also like the following idea: 11.h4N exf5 12.♖h3!?

11...exf5

If 11...exd5 12.♗xf6 ♖xf6 13.♘xd5 ♖f8 14.h3! ♘c6 15.g4 ♕h6 16.♕c1 and White swaps down to a clearly favourable endgame. 16...♕xc1† 17.♖xc1 ♘e7 18.♘xe7† ♗xe7 19.♔g2 White retained his advantage in Shalimov – Janturin, St Petersburg 2002.

12.♘b5

This is the point of 11.d5. White intends to capture the dark-squared bishop, leaving Black with a bad light-squared bishop.

12...♘e4 13.♘xd6 cxd6 14.♗e3 ♘a6 15.b4!N

15.♖c1 unnecessarily allows 15...♘ac5, as in Schlosser – Totsky, Pardubice 2007.

After the text I like the following illustrative line:

15...♘c7 16.♘d4 ♕g6 17.f3 b5 18.♘xb5 ♘xb5 19.cxb5 ♘c3 20.♕d2 ♘e4 21.♕b2 ♗xd5 22.♕d4

White has a clear positional advantage.

11.c5!

A strong and concrete approach.

Instead Black had serious counter-chances after 11.♗xf5 ♕h5! 12.h4 h6 in Khenkin – Bunzmann, Poland 1999.

An interesting alternative was tested in a recent game: 11.♗xf6 ♖xf6 12.c5 ♗f8 Black had to retreat, as the c5-pawn is untouchable due to 13.♕b3† winning the b7-bishop. 13.♕b3† ♔h8 14.♘d5 This is Doric – Hrvacic, Slovenia 2009, and now I think Black missed the best defensive idea: 14...♗xd5N 15.♕xd5 ♘c6 16.♖e1 ♘e7 17.♕c4 ♖b8 White has a good-looking position, but Black is pretty much in the game.

11...♗e7

Of course the c5-pawn is still untouchable: 11...bxc5? 12.♕b3† ♔h8 13.♕xb7+–

12.♗xf5 ♔h8

I also analysed the thematic move:

12...♕h5

White should continue:

13.h4

And now:

13...♗xf3 14.♕xf3

Also interesting is 14.gxf3!? bxc5 (weaker is 14...h6 15.♗xf6 ♖xf6 16.♕b3† ♔h8 17.♗g4!± followed by 18.♖e1) 15.dxc5 ♘c6 (15...♗xc5 allows White a strong initiative after 16.♘d5) 16.♘d5 White looks to be better.

14...♕xf3 15.gxf3 bxc5 16.dxc5 ♗xc5

Black has managed to regain the pawn, but White retains an initiative after:

17.♖d1

For example:

17...c6 18.♘e4 ♗e7 19.♔g2 d5 20.♘g3 a5 21.♖he1

White is better.

13.cxb6 axb6

Now I found the following interesting idea.



14.♗c2!?N

Removing the bishop from a vulnerable square and also intending to create threats along the b1-h7 diagonal with ♕d3, after a preparatory ♔g1 (to sidestep ...♗a6 tricks).

Instead 14.h4 as played in Likavsky – Bunzmann, Austria 2008, which was premature as it allows the reply 14...♘d5!N with unclear play.

14...♕h5

Black has a few alternatives:

14...c5 allows White to block the light-squared bishop by 15.d5! with a clear edge.

14...♘c6 is also unsatisfactory in view of 15.d5 ♘a5 16.♔g1 ♕h5 17.h4±.

14...♘g4 is met strongly by 15.h4! ♘c6 16.♔g1± and White is clearly better.

15.h4! ♗d6 16.♖h3! ♘c6 17.♔g1

Black has no compensation for his missing pawn.

Conclusion:

The English Defence surrenders a lot of space in the centre and White should be bold enough to take it with 3.e4. Black has various tricky tactical lines, but the variations above provide all the answers. The positional verdict is simple – White's extra space is the key factor.





Minor Systems

Black Knights Tango

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 ♘c6

3.♘f3

A) 3...d6 573
B) 3...e6 575

A) note to 4...e5



12.♗g5N

A) after 16...♕d7



17.b4N

B) after 9...♖b8



10.d5N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 ♘c6

The Black Knights Tango is an off-beat line that is respectable enough to be regularly ventured by GM Viktor Bologan. The Tango tempts White into advancing his pawns in the hope that the knights will dance away, leaving the white centre over-extended. We shall decline the invitation.

3.♘f3

This move is the best fit with our repertoire. If 3.♘c3 we would have to deal not only with 3...e5, but also 3...e6, which would probably lead to Nimzo-Indian type positions.

After 3.♘f3 Black has two main lines to consider: **A) 3...d6** and **B) 3...e6**.

Besides these, we should also have a quick look at two minor lines:

3...d5

Obviously this allows White to seize total control of the centre.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘f6 6.♘c3

Here Black probably should accept a passive position after 6...e6, since active development does not work:

6...♗g4

The problem is as follows:

7.d5!

And Black cannot play:

7...♘e5?

The lesser evil is 7...♗xf3, but even here after 8.gxf3 ♘b8 (or 8...♘e5 9.f4) 9.♕b3! Black's position is unpleasant.

8.♘xe5!

A well-known idea in various openings.

8...♗xd1 9.♗b5† c6 10.dxc6

Many games have reached this position; it is obvious that Black is losing too much material.

3...e5 also does not work: 4.d5 e4 5.dxc6 exf3 6.cxb7 ♗xb7 7.exf3± I do not believe Black has serious compensation for his missing pawn, Tempone – Olivieri, Santiago 1996.

A) 3...d6 4.♘c3 e5

This seems like the most serious option, but let's also consider a couple of alternatives:

4...g6 5.d5

Certainly we could also choose 5.g3, which would probably transpose to the Yugoslav variation of the King's Indian.

5...♘b8 6.g3!?N

Surprisingly, no one has tried this fianchetto set-up.

Of course the main line is 6.e4 ♗g7 7.♗e2 0–0 8.0–0. I found many games from this position, but it is hard for me to take them seriously, as the position is similar to a Classical King's Indian, except with one or even two extra tempos for White. The following is just a sample line:

6...♗g7 7.♗g2 0–0 8.♘d4!?

I like this move as it reduces Black's options.

8...e5 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.0–0 e5 11.♘c2 ♘c6

This is the game Rubinstein – Bluemich, Dresden 1926. I propose the following improvement:



12.♗g5N ♗e6 13.♘e3 ♕d7

If 13...♘d4 then White has the strong 14.♘b5!.

14.♘ed5 ♖ae8 15.♕d2±

White enjoys a pleasant game.

4...♗g4 5.d5 ♗xf3

If 5...♘b8 then we can use the thematic 6.♘d4! when Black's light-squared bishop is misplaced on g4. Dziuba – Przewoznik, Poland 2006, continued: 6...g6 7.g3 ♗g7 8.♗g2 ♕c8 9.h3 (or 9.f3) 9...♗d7 10.e4 0–0 11.♗e3 c5 And here I like 12.♘de2!?N ♘a6 13.g4 as after 13...♖b8 14.a4 ♘b4 15.♕d2 White has a promising position.

6.exf3 ♘e5 7.f4 ♘ed7 8.g3

Black's position may be solid, but his missing light-squared bishop is significant.

8...g6 9.♗g2 ♗g7 10.0–0 0–0 11.♗e3

White has a very pleasant game; the game Dokhoian – Donner, Porz 1991, continued:

11...a5 12.♘a4!? b6

Obviously it was better to refrain from this move.

13.♘c3 ♘c5 14.♘b5

White was clearly better, since Black lacks any counterplay.

5.g3



5...♗g4

The most popular alternative is:

5...exd4 6.♘xd4 ♗e7 7.♗g2 ♗d7

The other path is: 7...♘xd4 8.♕xd4 0–0 9.0–0 As always, I believe this pawn structure with a kingside fianchetto promises White a long-term edge. The following is a nice example: 9...c6 Otherwise it is hard to deal with the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal, but now the d6-pawn becomes a target. 10.b3 ♗e6 11.♗b2 ♕a5 12.e4 ♕h5 Black tries to create some play on the kingside. This is Donchenko – Varavin, Tula 2000, and now the natural-looking 13.♖fe1N ♗h3 14.f3 ♗xg2 15.♔xg2 ♖fe8 16.♖ad1± would secure White a pleasant game.

8.0–0 0–0

Now I recommend:

9.♘c2

Preventing Black's idea of ...♘xd4 followed by ...♗c6. It is usually wise to avoid swapping minor pieces when you have a space advantage.

9...♕c8 10.e4 ♗h3 11.♘e3

White has a pleasant advantage, for example:

11...♗xg2 12.♔xg2 ♖e8 13.b3 ♗f8 14.f3 g6 15.♗b2 ♗g7 16.♕d2 ♕d7 17.♖ad1

White is clearly better, thanks to his extra space, Brenninkmeijer – Martschausky, Germany 2001.

6.♗g2!?

Also not bad is the natural 6.d5, but it would allow Black some additional options.

6...♗e7

White should not worry about the following exchanges:

6...♗xf3 7.♗xf3 exd4

Clearly inferior is: 7...♘xd4 8.♗xb7 ♖b8 9.♗g2N ♕d7 (defending against ♕a4) 10.0–0 ♗e7 11.f4! And if 11...0–0 then 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.♖xf6! ♗xf6 14.e3± and White wins material.

8.♘b5 ♗e7 9.♘xd4 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 c6 11.0–0 0–0

This is Kirchner – Hohlbein, Germany 1995, and now I suggest a simple novelty:

12.♖d1N±



This gives White his traditional edge.

7.d5 ♘b8 8.h3 ♗h5

Exchanging the light-squared bishop would be a concession:

8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 0–0 10.e4

White enjoys a fine advantage, for instance:

10...♘fd7 11.h4!

Preventing the thematic ...♗g5.

11...a5 12.0–0 ♘c5 13.b3 ♘ba6 14.♖b1 c6 15.♗e3 cxd5?!

This only makes Black's position worse.

16.♕xd5 ♘b4 17.♕d2±

White's advantage was obvious in Uhlmann – Calvo Minguez, Madrid 1973.

9.♕b3!

A very annoying move that creates tricks on the long white diagonal.

9...♗xf3

White's tactical threats force Black into a long-term positional concession. The problem is that 9...♕c8 runs into the sneaky 10.♘xe5! dxe5 11.d6±, with a big advantage.

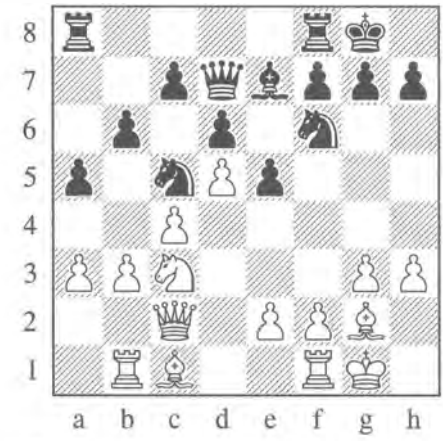
10.♗xf3 b6 11.0–0

The absence of Black's light-squared bishop and his general passivity makes White's position easy to play. For example:

11...♕c8 12.♗g2 ♘bd7 13.♕c2 a5 14.♖b1 ♘c5 15.b3

After provoking the weakening of Black's light squares, carrying out b2-b4 becomes a serious positional threat.

15...0–0 16.a3 ♕d7



This is S. Dizdar – Krpan, Ljubljana 1997, and now I suggest a logical novelty:

17.b4N axb4 18.axb4 ♘a6 19.♘b5±

White obviously has the upper hand.

B) 3...e6

This line is definitely Black's main choice.

4.g3 ♗b4†

If 4...d5 5.♗g2 dxc4 then play would transpose to the Catalan, so you can find this position covered in the first Volume.

5.♗d2 ♗xd2†

5...♕e7 6.♘c3 transposes to the Bogo-Indian variation (see Chapter 4, page 45).

6.♕xd2 d6

This is a new position for us, since in the Bogo-Indian with 3...♗b4† followed by ...♗xd2, we always have the option of playing e2-e4 quickly, because against the Bogo we delay the development of our kingside knight.

7.♘c3 0–0 8.♖d1!

A very important moment. After 8.♗g2 Black has a decent variation available in 8...e5 9.0–0 ♗g4 with complicated play, while instead the text move causes Black problems. The main point is that White temporarily stops ...e6-e5, and all Black's moves that prepare ...e6-e5 have drawbacks.

8...a6

With the text move Black intends to play on the wing. We will also examine a couple of other options, where Black prepares ...e6-e5.

8...♕e7 9.♗g2 e5 10.♘d5!

The key move in this line, which forces a favourable change of pawn structure after:

10...♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♘xd4 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.♕xd4 ♗d7

Another example is Komarov – Martinovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1999, which continued: 13...a5 14.♖d2 ♗d7 15.0–0 ♖fc8 16.♖c1 a4 17.♖dc2± Thanks to the permanent weakness of the c-pawn, White obtained a clear advantage.

14.♖d2

A necessary prophylactic move.

14...♖fd8 15.0–0 a5



This is Komarov – Skembris, Bolzano 1998, and now White played the most natural continuation:

16.♖c1

White should follow up with ♖dc2 with a clear superiority; the pressure along the c-file is obvious and strong.

8...♗d7 9.♗g2 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.0–0

Black has managed to carry out ...e6-e5, but his pieces lack coordination; in the following encounter he faced serious problems.

11...♗e6 12.♕e3! ♕c8

Black cannot play 12...♘d7? in view of 13.♘g5 ♗xc4 14.♖xd7 ♕xd7 15.♕e4+–.

13.♘d5

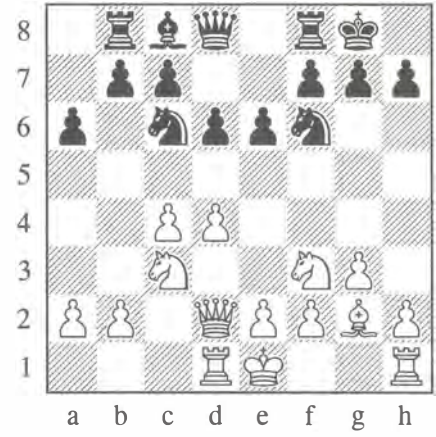
Also 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♕xe5 ♗xc4 15.♕f4 ♗e6 16.e4 c6 17.e5 ♘d7 18.♖d6± leads to an advantage for White.

13...♘g4 14.♕c5

White was much better in De Lange – Safvat, Siegen (ol) 1970.

9.♗g2 ♖b8

Black intends to carry out the ...b7-b5 advance.



10.d5N

In my opinion this is the most natural reaction to Black's idea. Instead Black easily solved his problems after 10.0–0 b5 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♖fe1 b4 13.♘a4 ♗d7 in Tregubov – Meier, Merida 2007.

10...♘a5

Another option is 10...♘e7. Then I like the following positional idea: 11.♘d4 e5 12.♘c2 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘b4!± Black did not achieve much by carrying out the ...b7-b5 advance, as White has clear targets on the queenside.

11.dxe6!

A well-timed change of pawn structure.

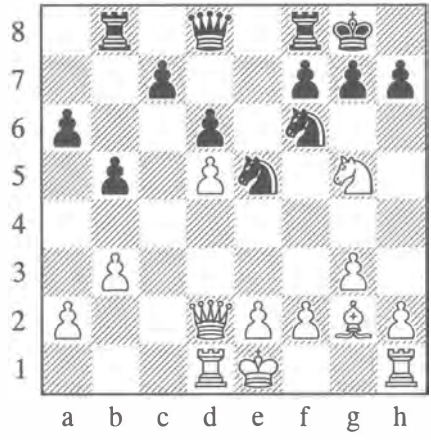
11...♗xe6

The point of the previous move is that White is better after 11...fxe6 12.c5! ♘c4 13.♕c1±.

12.b3 b5

Otherwise White simply has a favourable pawn structure.

13.♘d5 ♘c6 14.♘g5 ♗xd5 15.cxd5 ♘e5



16.0–0±

Once again we have managed to achieve a favourable pawn structure with Black's c7-pawn a long-term target.

Conclusion:

The Black Knights Tango is not a ridiculous line, but White can keep an edge with accurate play. Best of all, White can play in our standard repertoire style with a kingside fianchetto, so the reader should feel at home in the resulting positions. It is also worth remembering that the Tango can, at various points, transpose to the Catalan or Bogo-Indian.



Minor Systems



Old Indian

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘f3 ♘bd7 4.♘c3 e5

5.g3 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0–0 7.0–0

A) 7...♖e8	**579**
B) 7...exd4	**581**
C) 7...c6 8.e4 ♖e8 9.h3 a6 10.a4! a5 11.♗e3	**583**
C1) 11...♗f8	**584**
C2) 11...exd4	**586**

A) note to 13...♘b6



18.♕b3!N

C1) note to 15...♗g7



16.♘h2!?N

C2) note to 14...♕c7



14.♗g5!N

The Old Indian Defence looks like a poor man's King's Indian Defence; instead of developing the dark-squared bishop to g7, it goes to e7. Bent Larsen used to play this line regularly and with some success, but in general Black is worse in this system, as the bishop is too passive on e7. This is illustrated by the fact that Black often plays the bishop to f8 and later plays ...g6 and ...♗g7.

As with almost all the other openings, I am recommending a system for White that involves a kingside fianchetto. As ever, this causes Black a lot of problems.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘f3

I selected this move order for a couple of reasons. Firstly, because Black can simply force this via another move order (1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 ♘bd7 4.♘c3). Secondly, I recommend avoiding 3.♘c3 e5 4.♘f3 e4 5.♘g5 ♕e7!?, which has recently brought Black very decent results.

3...♘bd7 4.♘c3 e5

This line is heading for the Old Indian Defence, which is indeed quite similar to the new-fangled King's Indian Defence, with one big difference – the destination of Black's dark-squared bishop.

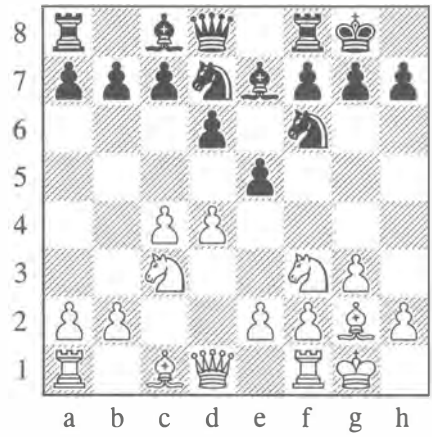
5.g3

This is my favoured move in this line, which stems from the fact that Black still has the option of switching to the King's Indian Defence. For example, after the most popular move, 5.e4, Black can choose 5...g6 transposing to the Classical line of the King's Indian with ...♘bd7, which is not part of my repertoire.

5...♗e7

If 5...g6 then we are heading for the King's Indian part of our repertoire, which is of course examined in a different chapter.

6.♗g2 0–0 7.0–0



This is the initial position of the whole variation. There are many possible moves, but as we cannot cover everything, we will have to decide what is important and what is not. I decided to concentrate on three main possibilities: **A) 7...♖e8, B) 7...exd4** and **C) 7...c6**.

A) 7...♖e8 8.e4

White very often opts for 8.♕c2 but I believe the following sequence is quite playable for Black: 8...♗f8 9.♖d1 c6 10.e4 ♕c7 11.h3 b5!

8...♗f8

Black's first choice; another option is 8...c6, which we will consider in line C under the 7...c6 move order.

9.h3 c6 10.♗e3 a6

The only decent plan for Black, as releasing the tension in the centre favours White: 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘c5 12.♕c2 a5 13.♖ad1 We have reached a position that will be examined in line B, using the 7...exd4 move order.

11.d5!?

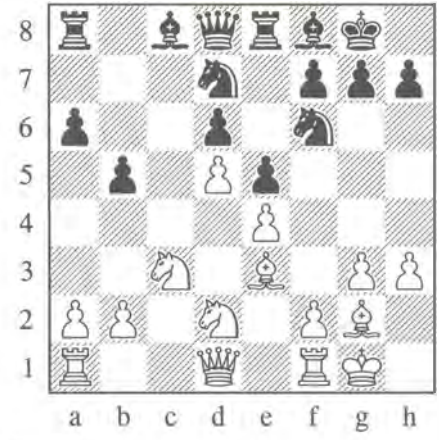
I want to show this additional idea for White, although the thematic 11.a4 was also possible and would eventually transpose to one of the lines considered below.

11...cxd5

Instead 11...♘c5? is just a blunder in view of 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8 15.♘xe5 winning a pawn.

12.cxd5 b5 13.♘d2

An optimal set-up for White's minor pieces. White enjoys a serious space advantage, thanks to his d5-pawn. His play on the queenside is quite easy to carry out and in general his chances are favourable. To get a feel for how to play the position we should have a look at several examples:



13...♘b6

There are a few other options:

13...g6 14.b4

White is ready to play a2-a4 next.

14...♘b6 15.a4 ♘xa4 16.♘xa4 bxa4



17.♘c4! ♗d7 18.♘b6 ♖b8 19.♘xd7 ♕xd7

So far we have been following Ftacnik – Hausner, Marianske Lazne 1978. Now White should have opted for the exchange of queens and a pleasant ending:

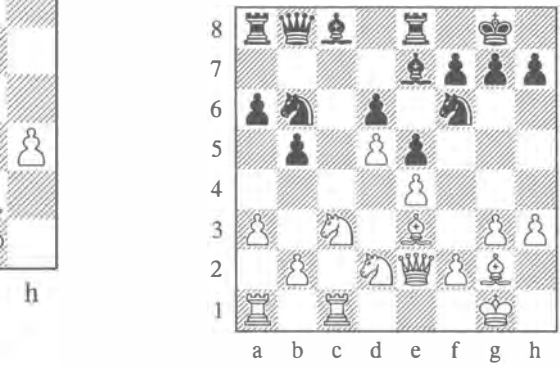
20.♕xa4 ♕xa4 21.♖xa4 ♖ec8 22.♖c1 ♖xc1† 23.♗xc1 ♘e8 24.♗d2 ♘c7 25.♗f1 ♖a8 26.♗d3±

It would be very hard for Black to hold this position.

13...♕c7 14.♕e2 ♗e7 15.♖fc1 ♕b8

This was played in Vukic – Zapata, Zenica 1986. Instead of the usual thematic idea of 16.b4 followed by 17.a4, I like another plan:

16.a3N ♘b6



17.♘a2!

The knight is heading for glory on c6.

17...♗d7 18.♘b4 ♕b7 19.♘c6 ♖ac8 20.♘a5 ♕b8 21.b3±

White is obviously better.

13...♗e7

This move is in the spirit of this variation; Black intends to transfer his dark-squared bishop to the d8-a5 diagonal, but White is very fast on the queenside.

14.b4 ♘b6 15.a4

The same thematic play as we have seen before.

15...bxa4 16.♘xa4 ♘xa4 17.♕xa4 ♗d7



Thus far we have been following the game A. Petrosian – Gulko, Soviet Union 1984. Here I think I have found an improvement on White's play with:

18.♕b3!N ♗b5 19.♖fc1 ♖c8 20.♗f1!

Black seems to find it hard to equalize, for instance:

20...♕d7 21.♗xb5 axb5

Or Black could try: 21...♕xb5 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♔g2 ♖b8 (the endgame after 23...♘d7 24.♕a4 ♕xa4 25.♖xa4 ♘b8 26.♗a7! is difficult for Black) 24.♕a2 h6 25.♕xa6 ♕xa6 26.♖xa6 ♖xb4 27.♖a8† ♔h7 28.♖a7 ♗f8 29.f3 After massive complications, Black's position is rather difficult. White has a clear target in Black's d6-pawn.

22.♔g2 h6 23.♕d3±

White is clearly better, due to the weakness of Black's b5-pawn.

14.a4!

With the knight on b6 as a target, White can immediately launch his a-pawn.

14...bxa4

The main point is 14...b4 is met strongly with 15.a5! ♘bd7 16.♘a4 with a clear advantage.

15.♘xa4 ♘xa4 16.♕xa4 ♗d7 17.♕a3 ♗b5 18.♖fc1 ♖c8 19.♖c3!

A neat positional idea. White creates pressure along the c-file, while capturing on c3 is clearly inferior for Black, as White would recapture with the b-pawn, followed by c3-c4 when Black is going to lose his a-pawn.

19...♖e7 20.♗f1 ♖ec7

This position was reached in Schroll – Appel, Germany 1998, and now White could have achieved an advantage by simple means:

21.♕a5 ♕d7 22.♗xb5! axb5 23.♖xc7 ♖xc7 24.♔g2

Next, White is going to attack the b5-pawn (with ♕b4, ♖a5 and ♘b1-c3) while Black's counterplay, if it exists, is well hidden.

B) 7...exd4 8.♘xd4

The most natural recapture, but 8.♕xd4!? is also worthy of consideration. Let's see one example: 8...♖e8 9.b3 ♗f8 10.♗b2 a5 11.♖fd1 ♕e7 12.♘e1 ♘c5 13.♘d3 ♘e6 14.♕e3 c6 15.♘a4! White had a nice edge in Gabancho – Galarce, Buenos Aires 2004.



8...♖e8

I also examined a couple of knight moves:

I did not find much point in the aggressive-looking:

8...♘e5

White simply continues his normal development, while Black remains passive.

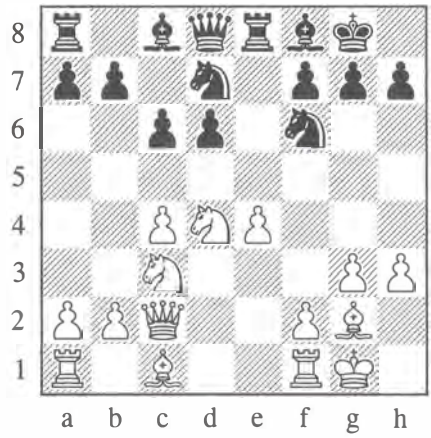
9.b3 c6 10.♗b2 ♖e8 11.♕d2 ♗d7 12.h3
White slowly prepares f2-f4, chasing Black's knight from the centre.
12...♕c8 13.♔h2 ♗d8 14.♘c2
Attacking the d6-pawn and thus not allowing Black to activate with ideas such as ...♗a5.
14...♗c7
This was J. Walker – M. Spiegel, Seattle 1974. And now I recommend a natural-looking novelty:
15.f4N ♘g6 16.e4 h5 17.♖ad1±
White has a serious advantage.

8...♘b6 9.♕b3
Not only defending the c4-pawn, but also preventing the idea of ...d6-d5. Although in fact Black would be far from equalizing even after carrying out ...d6-d5, as we shall see in the line below.
After 9.b3 d5N (if 9...c6 10.e4 Black should ask himself what his knight is doing on b6, as he can hardly hope to play ...d6-d5, as in this case White would favourably change the central structure with cxd5 ...cxd5, e4-e5) 10.cxd5 ♘fxd5 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.♗b2 White retains a strong advantage after either 12...c5 13.e4 ♘b4 14.♘f5! or 12...♗f6 13.♖c1 ♖e8 14.♕d2 followed by 15.e4.
9...c5 10.♘c2 ♗e6
Maybe trickier would be 10...♘g4, nevertheless after 11.♗f4 ♗e6 12.♘a3 White would enjoy a pleasant advantage.
11.♘e3 ♖b8 12.a4 ♕c8 13.♖d1±
In Villegas – Garcia Balado, Argentina 1936, Black did not gain any counterplay in return for his weakened d5-square and misplaced knight on b6.

9.♕c2
Now White can vary his set-up, although there is certainly nothing wrong with 9.e4.

9...♗f8
9...♘e5 does not bring Black any dividends after 10.b3.

10.e4 c6 11.h3
An essential move that prepares ♗e3.



11...a5
The attempt to free himself with a ...d6-d5 break falls short: 11...♘b6 12.b3 d5 This was played in Bannik – Pogrebissky, Kiev 1959, and now White had a strong possibility: 13.exd5!N cxd5 14.♖d1! a6 (Black cannot play 14...dxc4 in view of 15.♘c6!) 15.♘xd5 ♘bxd5 16.cxd5 ♘xd5 17.♗b2± White's bishops dominate the board.

12.♗e3 ♘c5 13.♖ad1
White is already threatening a small combination with 14.♘xc6 followed by 15.♗xc5.

13...♕b6
If 13...♕c7 then 14.b3! and White enjoys a space advantage, while Black has no counterplay on the queenside.

14.b3
I like this positional approach more than: 14.♘b3 ♘fd7 15.♘xc5 ♘xc5 16.♘a4 ♕a6 17.♘xc5 dxc5 18.a4 (better was 18.f4 ♗e6 19.b3 a4 20.f5 axb3 21.axb3 ♗c8 as in this case White keeps some advantage, but Black also has some play on the queenside, thanks to the open a-file) 18...♗e6 19.b3 b5! Black

had reasonable counterplay on the queenside in Pyhala – Valkesalmi, Lahti 1985.

14...a4 15.♖b1!

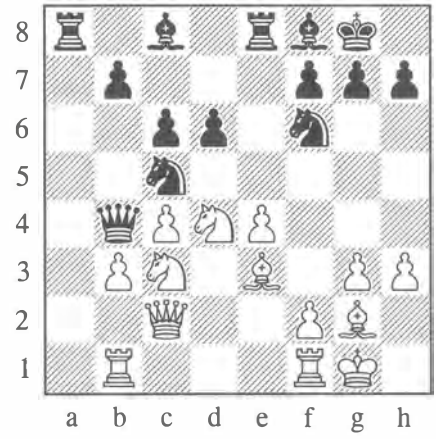
A well-timed switch to the queenside.

15...axb3 16.axb3 ♕b4?!

This was played in Jobava – Galego, Warsaw 2005, but it is inaccurate due to a clever trick.

Black should be satisfied with the passive 16...♕c7 even though in this case White enjoys a very pleasant game after 17.b4 ♘e6 18.♘b3.

Now, as pointed out by Bruzon in *Informant 94*, White overlooked a very nice idea:



17.♕d2!

The threat of 18.♘c2 followed by 19.b4 is very unpleasant.

17...♕b6

17...♘a6 18.♖a1! does not bring relief either.

18.b4!

This is the point of Bruzon's idea.

18...♘cxe4 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.♕d3!

Black cannot avoid losing material.

20...c5

20...♘f6 does not help as White can play 21.♘e6!±.

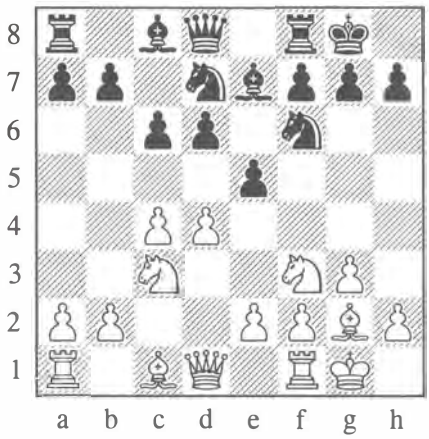
21.♗xe4 ♖xe4

Or if 21...cxd4 then 22.♗xd4 ♕c7 23.♗xh7† with a clear edge.

22.♕xe4 cxd4 23.♗xd4

White has a winning position.

C) 7...c6



In this line Black avoids (or at least delays) exchanging on d4, which is a logical approach. Instead, releasing the tension (as in the line we have just seen) is a concession that significantly eases White's task.

8.e4

Now the main line is:

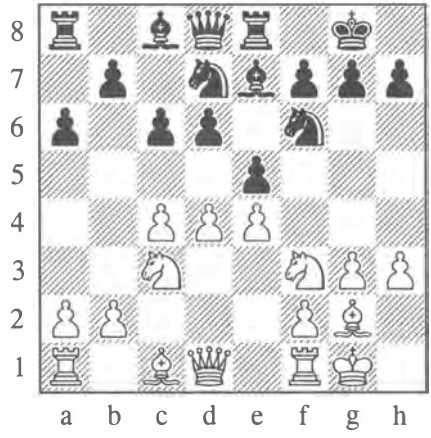
8...♖e8

Other popular alternatives are:

8...♕c7 Here we react in the same way as in the main line: 9.h3 a6 10.a4! a5 11.♗e3 And eventually, after 11...exd4 12.♘xd4 ♖e8 13.♕c2 and so on, we are heading towards the same position as in the main line.

8...a6 Again I consider White's best idea is to prevent the ...b7-b5 advance by radical means: 9.a4 (Instead 9.h3 b5 10.c5 ♗b7! leads to a position that slightly resembles a Meran variation of the Semi-Slav Defence, especially Black's set-up. The position is very complicated and I did not manage to find any advantage for White.) 9...a5 10.h3 ♖e8 11.♗e3 exd4 12.♘xd4 And we reach a position from our main line (line C2).

9.h3 a6



10.a4!

In my opinion this is the best continuation, stopping Black's counterplay connected with the ...b7-b5 advance. In order to gain a better understanding of the nuances of this line, I would like to show why I was not satisfied with other options:

10.d5 cxd5 11.cxd5 b5 White cannot reach his optimal set-up (with ♗e3 and ♘d2) as Black is already threatening 12...b4 attacking the e4-pawn.

10.♗e3 b5 11.c5 ♗b7 again leads to a rather double-edged position.

10...a5

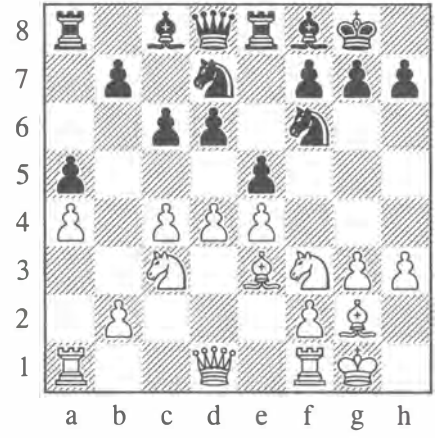
An obvious reaction; Black gains some positional trumps (such as a grip on the b4-square), but White's space advantage is still more significant.

11.♗e3

At this point Black has two main options, **C1) 11...♗f8** and **C2) 11...exd4**.

C1) 11...♗f8

In this line Black keeps the tension in the centre, at least for the moment.



12.♕c2

Meanwhile White continues with useful moves and normal development. There is no point in changing the character of the game with 12.d5 as after 12...♕c7 Black has reasonable play.

12...♕c7

Obviously 12...exd4 13.♘xd4 would transpose to our main line.

13.♖ad1 g6

Again 13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘c5 is another path to the main destination.

14.♖fe1

Instead 14.c5 is not so dangerous for Black: 14...dxc5 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♕xe5

And White cannot play 17.f4? in view of 17...♕h5!.

14...exd4

Black takes on d4 now in order to avoid specific problems with his other options. Thus it is very important that White is familiar with the following lines where Black attempts to maintain the tension:

14...♗g7

Now it is time to strike with:

15.c5! dxc5

Even worse is 15...exd4 16.cxd6 ♕xd6 17.♗xd4± followed by 18.e5.

16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♕xe5 18.f4 ♕c7

This time 18...♕h5 is met strongly by 19.e5 ♘d7 20.g4 ♕h4 21.♘e4 with an obvious advantage.

19.♗xc5 ♗e6 20.e5

20.♗f2!? also deserves serious attention.

20...♘d5 21.♘e4 ♖ed8 22.♕f2±

White had a clear advantage in Leontiev – Aleksikov, Moscow 1996

14...b6 15.d5!

After Black has moved his b-pawn this move is much stronger, because the c6- or b5-squares will be weakened.

15...♗b7

Or: 15...cxd5 16.cxd5 ♗a6 17.♘d2 ♖ec8 18.♗f1 and White has a significant positional advantage on the queenside, due to the weakness of Black's light squares.

16.dxc6 ♗xc6 17.♘d2 ♘c5 18.♘db1!

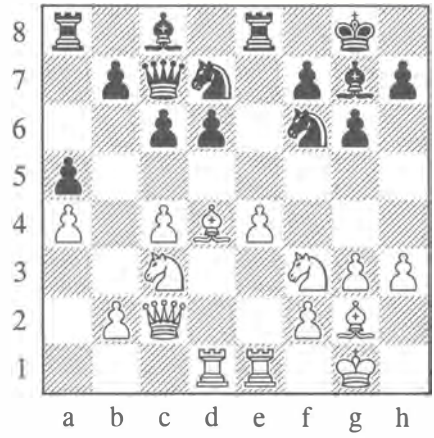
The knight is heading for the b5-square via a3; White undoubtedly has a positional edge.

15.♗xd4!?

This recapture is very interesting for White. If instead 15.♘xd4 ♘c5 then Black has a slightly favourable version of the main line.

15...♗g7

Black has also tried 15...b6. Now I like 16.♘h2!?N with the idea of preparing the f2-f4 advance. (In Matamoros Franco – Hickl, Seville 2006, White decided to regroup with 16.♗e3 and after 16...♗a6 17.b3 b5 18.axb5 cxb5 19.cxb5 ♗xb5 20.♘d4 ♗a6 21.♕d2 White gained the upper hand. Still, Black should have more reliable moves than 16...♗a6.) 16...♗b7 17.f4 ♗g7 18.g4 White slowly builds his activity on the kingside, while Black finds it hard to create any reasonable counterplay.



16.♘h2! ♘f8

This looks passive, but even after 16...♘c5 17.f4 ♘fd7 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♘f1 ♘b6 20.♘e3 ♗e6 21.b3± White is firmly in control.

17.f4 ♘e6 18.♗f2 ♘d7 19.♘f3 ♘ec5 20.♗d4 ♗f8

White also has pressure after 20...♗xd4† 21.♖xd4 ♘f6 22.♖ed1!.

21.♔h2

White's position is preferable. He can slowly generate an offensive on the kingside, while Black lacks any activity, Miezis – Heinig, Dresden 2008.

C2) 11...exd4

Black's most popular continuation, clarifying the situation in the centre immediately rather than maintaining the tension as in the previous line.

12.♘xd4

In this concrete situation I prefer to take back with knight, but 12.♗xd4!? is also a serious alternative.

12...♘c5 13.♕c2 ♗f8 14.♖ad1

White is threatening 15.♘xc6 followed by 16.♗xc5.

14...♕c7

Instead in Grachev – Kurochkin, Moscow 2005, Black opted for:

14...♕b6

The game continued:

15.f4 ♕b4 16.b3 g6

After 16...♗d7 White just continues his plan with 17.g4.

17.g4!N

In my view it would make no sense for White to just continue playing generally "useful" moves, since the time is right to start direct action, especially as the black queen is far from the kingside action. The following line is not forced, but it does illustrate typical play:

17...♗g7 18.f5 ♘fd7 19.♘ce2 ♘e5

White can develop his play either with 20.♘c1 ♗d7 21.♕f2 or 20.♘g3 ♗d7 21.f6!?. In either case Black's position looks very dangerous.

15.f4!N

I do not see any reason to refrain from this natural move. In practice, White has tried only the slow 15.♖fe1 and 15.♖d2. After the text move, I examined the following lines:

15...g6

After 15...♘fd7 16.g4 ♘a6 17.g5 ♘b4 18.♕e2 ♘c5 19.h4 White's position looks extremely promising as again Black has no real counterplay.

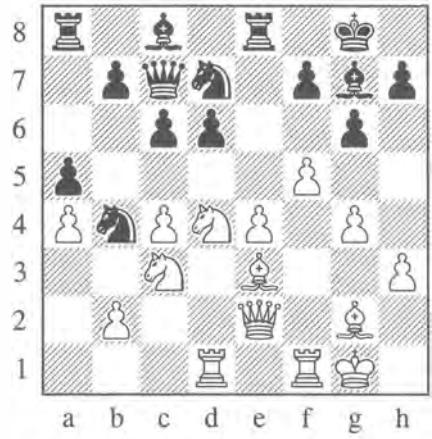
16.♗f2

The text move is essential prophylaxis. Instead the tempting 16.g4?! would lead to unnecessary complications after 16...♘fxe4! 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.♗xe4 ♕e7.

16...♘fd7 17.g4 ♘a6

A thematic regrouping, but Black hardly achieves anything on the queenside.

18.f5 ♘b4 19.♕e2 ♗g7 20.♗e3!



Followed by ♕f2. White is better.

Conclusion:

The Old Indian looks like a more passive King's Indian and in this case looks are not deceiving. Our usual kingside fianchetto secures an edge, but Black's position is often rather solid. There are also some sharper lines, so the reader should study the lines above with care.

Chapter 37

Minor Systems



Queen's Indian Attempt

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6

4.♗g2

note to 7...♗e7



10.e4!?N

note to 10...♘fd7



13.e4N

after 11...♘a6



12.e4!N

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6



This is a bit of a left-over from the Catalan treated in the first book. I would not go so far as to call it wrong or dubious, but it is rather primitive. If Black is willing to play a Queen's Indian type of position he has a wide choice after 3...d5 (with the bishop on a6 or b7 etc).

4.♗g2 d5

This position might also arise via the Catalan move order 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4.♗g2 b6.

The alternative is

4...c6

This is objectively worse, but in some ways more logical. Black plans to play ...♗a6 and ...d5 at a suitable moment, but White has other plans.

5.e4!

The most principled and strongest response. If 5.♘f3 the play would almost certainly transpose to some version of the Catalan.

5...d5

Black does not have much choice, as White was already threatening the unpleasant 6.e5.

6.e5 ♘fd7

Now it is obvious that White has a promising position with his spatial superiority. I worked out the following line for him.

7.♘d2

A serious alternative might be 7.♘e2!?.

7...♗a6

I also examined 7...♗e7 8.♘e2. (This is more flexible than 8.♘f3.) The knight is heading for f4 where it will generate additional pressure against the d5-pawn, significantly hindering the ...c6-c5 advance. 8...0–0 9.0–0 ♗b7 10.♘f4 ♘a6 11.b3± and White has a pleasant edge.



8.♘e2!?N

I prefer this over the slow 8.b3 as occurred in Flear – Chapelle, Bastia 1997, especially since Black now has an interesting opportunity to play 8...c5!N (exploiting the slight vulnerability of White's centre after 8.b3) 9.cxd5 exd5 10.♘e2 (The d5-pawn is untouchable: 10.♗xd5? ♘xe5 allows Black to seize the initiative.) 10...♘c6 with counterplay.

8...♗b4 9.♘c3!

It turns out that White can manage perfectly well without b2-b3.

9...0–0 10.0–0 dxc4

This is not forced, but if Black avoids the principled line it is obvious that he will have failed to equalize from the opening.

11.♘de4 ♗b7

The freeing attempt 11...f5 does not bring any relief, as after 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♘g5 ♖e8 14.♖e1 White keeps serious pressure.

12.♕g4 ♔h8 13.♕h5 f6 14.♗f4

White has a powerful initiative for the pawn.

5.cxd5

This move leads to a favourable version of the Queen's Indian for White. He can also play 5.♘f3 but he will usually want to take on d5 at some point, and delaying it will only give Black extra options.

5...exd5

5...♘xd5

This is hardly advisable, as White gains a definite edge after:

6.e4 ♗b4†

Now I believe the most accurate is:

7.♗d2N

If 7.♘d2 Goltsov – Aleshin, Tula 2003, it appears that Black can get away with 7...♘e7!?N not fearing 8.♕a4† ♘ec6 9.d5 (9.♘e2 ♗a6 is also pretty unclear) 9...exd5 10.exd5 ♕e7† with unclear complications.

7...♗xd2† 8.♕xd2 ♘e7 9.♘c3 ♗b7 10.♘f3 0–0 11.0–0

White has a pleasant advantage, for instance:

11...♘d7 12.♖ac1 ♘f6 13.♕e3±

6.♘c3 ♗b7



7.♘f3

This is a natural move, but the knight can also consider an alternative route: 7.♘h3!? ♗e7 8.♘f4 0–0 9.0–0 ♖e8 (9...♘e4? simply blunders a pawn after 10.♘fxd5! Reshevsky – Tartakower, Nottingham 1936.) 10.a3 h6 11.b4± As often happens in these positions, White is slightly better but Black is not without chances, Flear – Savinel, Corsica 1997.

7...♗e7

The most popular choice, but we should also consider another natural continuation:

7...♘bd7

This does not allow White the idea he executes in the main line.

8.0–0 ♗e7 9.♘e5 c6

The only playable move. 9...0–0? is a serious inaccuracy due to 10.♕a4! when Black is under serious pressure. One recent example continued 10...♘xe5 11.dxe5 ♘e8 and here in the game Miroshnichenko – Berlin, Minsk 2007, White missed an easy tactical trick: 12.♘xd5! ♗xd5 13.♖d1 regaining the material, with the possible continuation 13...c6 14.e4 ♘c7 15.exd5 cxd5 16.♗e3 with a large advantage.



10.e4!?N

This natural move does not appear to have been tried.

10...dxe4

10...0–0?! runs into the neat 11.♘xc6! ♗xc6 12.exd5 ♗b7 13.d6 and White will emerge with an extra pawn.

10...♘xe4 11.♘xe4 dxe4 (11...♘xe5 12.dxe5 dxe4 13.♕g4 is clearly better for White) 12.♕g4 g6 13.♕xe4 and White has a pleasant, risk-free initiative.

11.♕a4!

The key point of White's previous move. Black's position seems pretty reliable after the natural 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 ♘xe5 13.dxe5 ♕xd1 14.♖xd1 ♖b8! followed by a quick ...c6-c5.

11...b5

Black also suffers after 11...♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♘d7 (or 12...♘d5 13.♖d1 0–0 14.♗xe4 with advantage) 13.♕xe4 ♘c5 14.♕g4 0–0 15.♗h6 ♘e6 16.♘e4 with very promising play.

12.♕c2 0–0 13.♘xe4 ♖c8 14.♗e3±

White has a clear positional advantage, thanks to the passivity of Black's light-squared bishop.

8.♕a4†!?

I decided to concentrate on this move, which aims to pose more concrete problems than the official main line.

After 8.0–0 0–0 it seems like White has a slight pull almost everywhere, but at the same time Black always has a pretty sound position. The Queen's Indian has always been considered a very solid opening for Black and rightly so.



8...c6

This is the main reply. Let's have a look atBlack's other options:

Unsatisfactory is 8...♗c6?! 9.♕c2 when the light-squared bishop is obviously misplaced on c6. 9...0–0 10.0–0 ♘bd7 11.♗f4 ♖c8 12.♖ac1 (12.♘e5!N ♗b7 13.♕a4 was even stronger) 12...a6 13.♖fd1 ♗b7 14.♗h3 h6 15.♘e5 c5 16.♘xd7 ♘xd7 17.dxc5 ♖xc5 18.♕b3 with a clear advantage, Ivanchuk – Voigt, Mainz 2007.

Even worse is 8...♘bd7? 9.♘e5 0–0 and now White is clearly better after 10.♘c6 (10.0–0 was examined after 7...♘bd7) 10...♗xc6 11.♕xc6.

8...♕d7

This is the only truly playable alternative to the main line.

9.♕b3!

I also checked 9.♕xd7† ♘bxd7 10.♘b5 and now Black should play 10...0–0! (White retains a slight edge after 10...♗b4† 11.♗d2 ♗xd2† 12.♘xd2 ♔d8 13.♖c1. The trade of dark-squared bishops is usually favourable for White. 13...a6 14.♘c3 ♔e7 15.0–0 ♖he8 16.♖c2±) 11.♘xc7 ♖ac8 12.♘b5 ♘e4! and it looks like Black has interesting compensation for the sacrificed pawn. An approximate line runs 13.0–0 a6 14.♘a3 ♗xa3 15.bxa3 ♖c2 16.♖e1 ♘df6 with plenty of activity.

9...0–0 10.0–0

Now Black's queen blocks what would have been a potential destination square for the b8-knight, while also being a target for a knight jump to e5.

10...♘a6

Clearly inferior is 10...c5?! 11.dxc5 ♗xc5 (if 11...bxc5 12.♘e5! Black loses a pawn) 12.♖d1 and Black has quite a poor version of the IQP position.

11.♘e5 ♕e6 12.♗g5 ♖ad8

I also examined 12...c5 13.♗xf6! gxf6 (This is forced; 13...♗xf6 14.♘xd5 ♗xe5 15.dxe5 is clearly favourable for White, as the e5-pawn is untouchable: 15...♕xe5? 16.♘f6† ♕xf6 17.♗xb7+–) 14.♘f3 Although the black position is playable, the damaged kingside structure should enable White to count on a long-term edge.

13.♘d3 c6

After 13...h6 14.♘f4! ♕d6 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♘cxd5 ♗xd4 17.♖ad1± Black is under serious pressure.

14.a4!?

A very interesting idea, intending to attack Black's pawn formation on the queenside.

14...h6 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.e3 ♗d6 17.a5 b5 18.♖fc1

White has a pleasant positional edge, Mitenkov – Dragomarezkij, Moscow 1991.

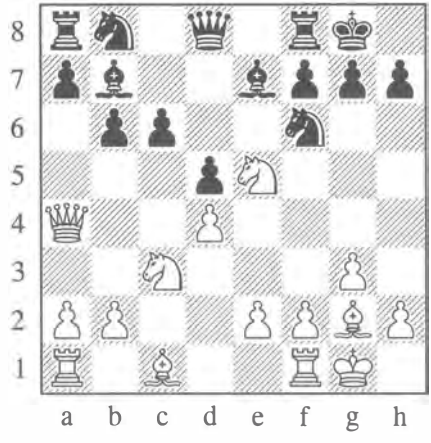
9.♘e5!

It is important to be precise with the move order. In case of the natural 9.0–0 Black has the extra option of 9...♘bd7.

9...0–0

After 9...♘fd7 10.♘d3 0–0 11.0–0 we reach the position from our main line.

10.0–0



The point of White's opening strategy has been to hinder the development of the b8-knight. Black must now decide how to solve that problem.

10...♘fd7

The alternatives are:

10...b5 is hardly an ideal solution. Now Black can hardly hope to achieve the thematic ...c6-c5 advance, and his light-squared bishop looks destined to remain passive for quite some time. 11.♕c2 ♕b6 12.♖d1 ♖d8 was seen in the game Urban – Delander, Berlin 1993.



Now I like the simple 13.e4N with the following approximate line: 13...♘a6 14.♗e3 ♘b4 15.♕b3 a5 16.a4 bxa4 17.♘xa4 ♕c7 18.♖ac1 with definite positional pressure.

10...a5 11.♗f4 b5 12.♕c2 ♕b6 was tried in Cvitan – Vucinic, Novi Sad 1985. Now instead of the slow 13.♖ad1, I suggest the more natural 13.e4!. I examined the following line: 13...♘a6 14.exd5 cxd5 (If 14...♘b4 15.♕e2 ♘bxd5 16.♗xd5 cxd5 17.♕xb5 White keeps a healthy extra pawn) 15.♕d3 ♘c7 16.♖fe1 and White has serious positional pressure.

11.♘d3 ♘a6

This position has occurred a few times in tournament practice, but White somehow refrained from the following natural move:

12.e4!N

Breaking open the centre is the best way to fight for the initiative.

12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘c7

The knight is heading for d5, easing the pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal. Nevertheless White's position remains preferable after:

14.♖e1



14...♖e8

If 14...♘d5 White maintains the initiative by means of 15.♘c3 ♘7f6 16.♘e5 ♕d6 17.♗d2.

15.♘c3

Black is under some pressure, for instance:

15...♘d5 16.♘xd5 cxd5 17.♗f4 ♘f6 18.♖ac1±

With a pleasant edge.

Conclusion:

The set-up with 3...b6 is rarely seen at high levels, but it generally leads to quite solid positions for Black. That is why I was attracted to the slightly unusual 8.♕a4†!?, which takes Black away from his usual comfort zone and immediately poses concrete problems for the defence. After inducing the defensive move ...c6, the plan of breaking open the centre with e4 seems quite appealing. Obviously Black's set-up cannot be refuted, but White can certainly obtain a pleasant position with good chances for an ongoing initiative.





Minor Systems

Odd Ideas

Variation Index

1.d4

A) 1...e5?! 594
B) 1...♘c6 2.d5 ♘e5 3.e4 e6 4.f4 ♘g6 5.dxe6 596
B1) 5...fxe6 597
B2) 5...dxe6 599

A) after 11...♘h6



12.f4!?N

B1) after 8...♘h4



9.♘g5!N

B2) 14...♘f5



15.♖hd1!N

In this chapter we shall look at two odd ideas in reply to our favourite pawn push.

1.d4

Our lines in this chapter are **A) 1...e5?!** and **B) 1...♘c6**.

A) 1...e5?!



This seems to me the worst possible reply to White's first move. I am sure you will not be surprised to learn that White accepts the sacrifice.

2.dxe5 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♕e7

This is Black's main idea: he either hopes to regain the pawn, or to jump with his queen to b4 in search of tricks.

3...f6

I cannot take this gambit seriously either. White is a pawn up for absolutely nothing.

4.exf6

Also worthy of consideration is 4.e4 with the idea 4...fxe5 5.♗c4 ♘f6 6.♘g5, but I definitely prefer to play with a healthy extra pawn.

4...♘xf6

Many set-ups are possible and Black's compensation is really questionable. I worked out the following arrangement for White:

5.g3 d5

Or 5...♗c5 6.♗g2 d6 7.0–0 ♗f5 8.♘c3 (8.c3 followed by 9.♘d4 is also a nice idea) 8...♕d7 as in Umansky – Walter, Augsburg 2001. Now in the game White was better after 9.♘a4, but I believe even stronger would be 9.♗g5N with the idea of capturing the knight followed by ♘d5. 9...♘e4 (horrible for Black would be 9...0–0–0 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♘d5 and White will easily create a queenside attack with c3, b4, a4 and so on) 10.♘a4 ♗b6 11.♗f4 With the idea 11...0–0 12.♘xb6 axb6 13.♘h4! with a huge advantage, as Black has to give up his second bishop.

6.♗g2 ♗c5 7.0–0 0–0



8.♗g5 ♗e6 9.♘c3 a6

Obviously this is a very slow move, but even after the best line 9...h6 10.♗xf6 ♖xf6 11.♘e1! ♗d4 12.♘d3 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 White's advantage is undisputable.

10.♘e1 ♘e7 11.♘d3 ♗d6 12.♗xf6 ♖xf6 13.e4

White had a decisive advantage in Kludacz – Savary, Rennes 2008.

4.♗f4

One approach for White would be to guess that you will face this line once in your life, and decide to play something like 4.♘c3 ♘xe5 5.e4, or 4.g3 ♘xe5 5.♗g2, developing normally, while Black's queen is obviously

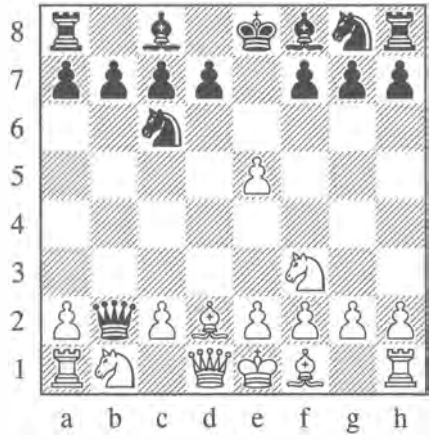
misplaced on e7. But when working on this book I felt Black's dubious opening deserves to be refuted, which is why I decided to develop a line based on the principled 4.♗f4.

Another quite promising idea is 4.♕d5 f6 5.exf6 ♘xf6 6.♕b3. White seems to be a pawn up.

4...♕b4†

The point of Black's 3rd move. Instead Black has absolutely no compensation after 4...f6 5.exf6 ♕xf6 6.♕c1. After 6...d5, as played in Solozhenkin – Bocchicchio, Montecatini Terme 1999, White could easily have accepted the second pawn: 7.♗xc7 ♗f5 8.c3 with an enormous advantage.

5.♗d2 ♕xb2



This is the moment Black has been waiting for. However, we are not going to walk into the trap.

6.♘c3!

There is a famous childish trick: 6.♗c3?? ♗b4 7.♕d2? ♗xc3 8.♕xc3 ♕c1 mate!

6...♗b4

The only more or less playable continuation. Other options are just bad:

6...a6 7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.♘d5 ♔d8 9.e4 with a huge advantage for White.

6...♘b4 7.♘d4 c6 (If 7...c5 8.♖b1 ♕a3 9.♘db5 then Black's position is hopeless: 9...♕a5 10.a3 ♘a6 11.♘e4 Followed by a check on d6.) 8.♖b1 ♕a3 9.♖b3 ♕a5 10.a3 ♘d5 11.♘f5!N Black can hardly survive for long. For example, 11...♘xc3 12.♗xc3 ♕d8 13.e4 with complete domination.

7.♖b1 ♕a3 8.♘d5

Out of all the promising continuations the text seems to me the most accurate.

8...♗a5

The alternative is:

8...♗xd2† 9.♕xd2 ♕xa2 10.♖d1 ♔d8

After 10...♔f8 11.♘xc7 ♖b8 12.♘b5 Black has no extra material to compensate for his suffering.

11.♘g5 ♘h6



12.e6!

A nice tactical trick, although even after the modest 12.f4 White's compensation for the pawn would be more than sufficient.

12...d6N

Obviously the only move. Strangely enough, in both games that reached this position Black lost in the same way: 12...♕a5? 13.e7†! ♔e8 14.♕xa5 ♘xa5 15.♘xc7† ♔xe7 16.♘xa8 and White wins.

13.exf7

13.e7† is not entirely clear, as Black calmly continues: 13...♔d7 (13...♘xe7 loses to 14.♘xc7) 14.g3 ♕a5 15.♗h3† f5!

13...♖f8 14.♘xc7!

The decisive blow.

14...♔xc7 15.♕xd6† ♔b6 16.♘e4!

The point. 16.♕xf8? leads to a perpetual after 16...♕a5† 17.♖d2 ♕a1†.

16...♕xc2

16...♗f5 loses on the spot to 17.♘c3 ♕xc2 18.♘d5†.

17.♘d2 ♖xf7 18.♖b1† ♕xb1† 19.♘xb1

White has a decisive advantage.

9.♖b5 ♗xd2†

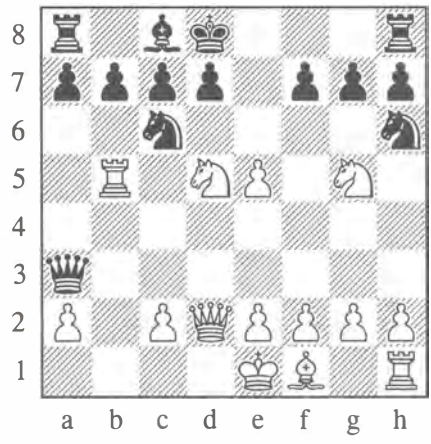
9...a6? is just a blunder, but was still played in Koenig – Neumann, Heroldsbach 1997. White decided the issue immediately with 10.♖xa5! ♘xa5 11.♘xc7†.

10.♕xd2 ♔d8 11.♘g5

The modest 11.c3 also deserves attention: 11...♘ge7 12.e4 ♘xd5 13.♖xd5 ♔e7 14.♘d4 ♘xd4 15.cxd4 With a clear advantage, as in Luzuriaga – Valverde Lopez, e-mail 2002.

11...♘h6

Now I believe White should continue with:



12.f4!?N

This is a slight improvement over 12.e4 ♘xe5 13.♖b3 ♕d6 14.f4 ♘c6, as in Hartwich – Grott, e-mail 1999, where White also gained a clear advantage.

12...a6

Or 12...♖e8 13.e3 ♕xa2 14.♗e2 with a big advantage.

13.♖b3 ♕xa2 14.♘c3 ♕a1† 15.♖b1 ♕a5 16.e3

Despite being a pawn up, Black's position is close to losing, as the following line illustrates:

16...♖e8 17.♗c4 ♘xe5 18.fxe5 ♕xe5 19.♗xf7! ♕xg5 20.♗xe8 ♔xe8 21.♘d5 ♕e5 22.0–0

White wins.

B) 1...♘c6

This move is very seldom seen at GM level, although of course there was a Kramnik – Short game at the Dresden Olympiad. White has a pleasant choice between the main move 2.d5, or 2.♘f3 transposing to the Chigorin Defence. Also 2.c4 e5 3.d5 is a decent way of fighting for an advantage.

2.d5

This is undoubtedly the most principled continuation.

2...♘e5 3.e4

It is like watching the Alekhine Defence in a mirror.

3...e6

In my opinion this is the only playable independent line.

3...♘g6 is an acceptable move order as after 4.f4 both 4...e5 and 4...e6 would transpose to our main line after 5.dxe6.

3...d6

This seems very passive to me.

4.f4 ♘g6 5.♘f3 e5 6.dxe6

Less clear is 6.f5 ♘6e7 and Black has the idea of undermining White's centre from both flanks by means of ...g7-g6 and ...c7-c6.

6...fxe6 7.♗d3

Black has serious difficulties with developing his kingside.

7...♘f6

I also investigated 7...e5 when Black's position is very difficult after 8.f5 ♘6e7 9.0–0 ♘f6 10.♘c3. Now I worked out the following line: 10...♘c6 11.♘g5! h6 12.♘e6 ♗xe6 13.fxe6 White's advantage is probably decisive, as ♘d5 is coming with devastating effect, while 13...♗e7 loses immediately to 14.♖xf6 followed by ♕h5.



8.e5!N

This natural advance seems much stronger than 8.0–0 c6 9.♔h1 as in Skodvin – Wrangell, Norway 1991.

8...♘d5

8...dxe5 does not bring Black much relief: 9.fxe5 (less clear is 9.♗xg6† hxg6 10.♕xd8† ♔xd8 11.♘xe5 ♖h5 12.♘xg6 ♗d6 and Black has some compensation for his missing pawn) 9...♘g4 10.♕e2 ♕d5 11.♗xg6† hxg6 12.♗d2 Followed by ♘c3 and 0–0–0; Black's position looks very dangerous.

9.♗xg6† hxg6 10.♕d3

White is clearly better.

4.f4

Again this is the most principled decision. The difference with the immediate 4.dxe6 is that after 4...fxe6 5.f4 Black's knight is not obliged to go to g6 and can step back to the more flexible f7-square.

4...♘g6

Only move. 4...♗c5? loses simply to: 5.dxe6 ♗xg1 (the point is that Black cannot recapture with the f-pawn: 5...fxe6 6.♕h5†) 6.♖xg1 ♘c6 7.exf7† ♔xf7 8.♗c4†+– Hulak – Mestrovic, Yugoslavia 1983.

5.dxe6



This is the crossroads for Black in this variation. Black can recapture with either pawn: **B1) 5...fxe6** or **B2) 5...dxe6**.

B1) 5...fxe6 6.♘f3 ♗c5

After 6...d6 7.♗d3 the play would transpose to the 3...d6-line.

7.♘c3 ♘h6

The most frequently played continuation. I also investigated two other options:

7...♘f6 8.e5 ♘g4 9.♘e4 ♕e7

After 9...♘e3 10.♗xe3 ♗xe3 11.g3 White's advantage is obvious. For example: 11...♕e7

12.a3 Before starting concrete action, White takes the necessary prophylactic action by covering the b4-square. 12...0–0 13.♕d3 ♗xf4 (Black tries to complicate matters, as after 13...♗b6 14.0–0–0± it is hard to see how Black is going to develop his queenside) 14.gxf4 ♘xf4 This was Sutkovic – Kalajzic, Croatia 2006, and now after the accurate 15.♕d2 ♘g6 (15...b6 runs into 16.♘f6†! ♖xf6 17.exf6 ♕xf6 18.♕d4 with a decisive advantage) 16.♕e3! Black still has no compensation.

10.♕e2!?N

I believe this move is stronger than 10.c3 as in Hampel – Malinin, corr. 1997, which looks pretty slow.

10...0–0 11.♘fg5 ♘h6 12.g3 d5

This seems to me like Black's only decent try to create some activity.

13.♘xc5 ♕xc5 14.♗e3 d4

White also retains an edge after 14...♕e7 15.0–0–0 ♘f5 16.♗f2 h6 17.♘f3 and White is ready to start an offensive by means of h4-h5, followed by g3-g4.

15.♗g1 ♕b4† 16.♕d2 ♕xd2† 17.♔xd2 ♘f5 18.♗c4 ♖e8 19.♗f2

White has a clear advantage.

7...d6 8.♘a4!

White should take the opportunity to exchange Black's dark-squared bishop.

8...♗b6 9.♘xb6 axb6



10.♗d3!N

This is an obvious improvement over 10.e5 ♘8e7 when matters were not so clear in Ruban – Ermenkov, Miskolc 1990.

10...♘8e7

10...♘f6 runs into the unpleasant 11.e5.

11.0–0 0–0 12.g3±

White is better due to his bishop pair and space advantage. We also should not forget about Black's misplaced knight on g6.

8.f5!

This is a very active and principled move.

8...♘h4

The alternative is 8...exf5 9.♗g5 ♗e7 (if 9...♘e7 then 10.♗xh6 gxh6 11.♕d2± poses Black serious problems) 10.♗xh6 gxh6 11.exf5 ♘h4 12.♘xh4 ♗xh4† 13.g3 ♕e7† as in D. Obukhov – Davidovich, USA 2004. Now many moves lead to an advantage for White, but the most accurate is: 14.♗e2 ♗g5 15.♕d4 ♗f6 (instead 15...0–0 16.♘d5 ♕d6 17.0–0 is also clearly better for White) 16.♕c4!±

8...♘g4 is simply bad in view of 9.fxg6 ♘f2 10.♕e2 ♘xh1 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.0–0–0± and Black's knight is trapped in the corner.



9.♘g5!N

This unexpected knight jump (with the idea of ♕h5) poses Black serious problems.

In Minasian – Teran Alvarez, Ubeda 1999, White opted for the natural 9.g3 ♘xf3† 10.♕xf3 and was better in this complicated position.

9...exf5

There are other moves such as 9...0–0 10.♕h5 when Black simply loses his knight for no compensation, or 9...♘6xf5 10.exf5 ♘xf5 11.♗d3 when White has a large advantage.

10.♕h5† ♘g6 11.exf5 ♘xf5

Black loses by force after 11...♕e7† 12.♘ge4 ♗b4 13.♗d3 ♕h4† 14.♕xh4 ♘xh4 15.♗xh6 gxh6 16.0–0 and the knight is trapped on h4.

12.♗d3

Black has no defence against White's direct threats, for instance:

12...d5

12...♕f6 does not help, as after 13.♖f1 d6 14.♕e2† White is winning.

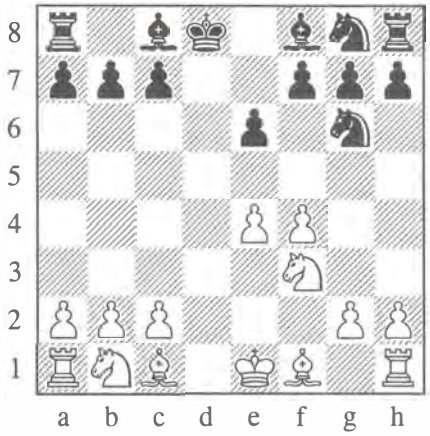
13.♖f1 ♕e7† 14.♔d1 ♘h6



15.h3!

Black cannot avoid losing material.

B2) 5...dxe6 6.♕xd8† ♔xd8 7.♘f3



In my opinion, despite the exchange of queens, Black has not managed to solve his problems, as the arising endgame is highly unpleasant for Black due mainly to two factors. Firstly, Black's wandering king is a constant problem. Secondly, his knight is clearly misplaced on g6, where it is restricted by White's f4-pawn, and it will definitely take time to re-enter the game. Meanwhile, White enjoys a pleasant space advantage and can choose between many possible set-ups.

7...♗c5

Black's most popular move. The other options are:

7...♗b4†

This seems pointless, as White's pawn will be very useful on c3.

8.c3 ♗c5 9.♗d3

I also like 9.♘bd2 with the idea of meeting 9...♘f6 with the immediate 10.e5 followed by 11.♘e4, while the f4-pawn is certainly untouchable in view of 9...♘xf4 10.♘b3 ♗d6 11.e5 winning a piece.

9...♘f6 10.♔e2 a5 11.g3 ♔e7 12.♘bd2 a4

After 12...♖d8 White executes the same idea: 13.e5 ♘d5 14.♘e4 ♗b6 15.a3! With the unpleasant idea of driving Black's knight from d5 with 16.c4.

13.e5 ♘d5 14.♘e4 ♗b6 15.♗d2!

White was much better in Karpov – Berlandier, Internet Simul 1998.

7...♘f6



8.e5!?N

A novelty, but in my opinion a very natural reaction. Previously White has mainly tried 8.♘c3, but after 8...♗b4 9.♗d3 ♗d7 10.0–0 ♗c5† 11.♔h1 ♘g4 the position was not at all clear in I. Smirnov – Zubarev, Alushta 2001.

8...♘d5 9.g3

As in the previous line, White's main idea is to slowly prepare the c2-c4 advance, driving back Black's knight from the centre. The following line is not forced, but shows the main ideas:

9...♗c5 10.a3 ♗d7 11.♗d3 ♗c6

Or 11...a5 12.♘bd2 ♗c6 13.♘e4 ♗b6 14.♔e2± and next 15.c4.

12.b4 ♗b6 13.♔e2

White is clearly better, thanks to his huge space advantage. Black's minor pieces hardly have any good squares.

8.♘c3 ♘f6

I also examined:

8...♗d7 9.♗d3 ♘f6 10.e5 ♘g4 11.♘e4 ♗b6

If 11...♗e3 12.h3 ♗xc1 13.♖xc1 ♘e3 14.♔f2 ♘d5 15.g3± the swap of dark-squared bishops does not really help Black, and White is clearly better.

12.h3 ♘e3 13.♗xe3 ♗xe3 14.g3

There is a well-known saying: if you have one bad piece, then your whole position is bad. This is probably the case here, as Black's knight is poorly placed on g6.

14...♗c6 15.♔e2 ♗b6 16.c4 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 c6 18.b4

White is dominant.

9.e5 ♘d5 10.♘e4 ♗b6 11.g3 ♗d7 12.♗d2 ♘e3 13.♗d3 ♗c6 14.♔e2 ♘f5



In Baumegger – Feistenauer, Austria 1997, White put his king's rook on e1 and had no regrets, but objectively he should have played:

15.♖hd1!N ♔c8 16.b4 ♖d8 17.a4

Black is really suffering.

Conclusion:

There is no doubt 1...e5 is a dubious continuation and I think the line I recommend is very close to be a refutation. On the other hand 1...♘c6 has some point, for example if 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 ♗g4 White would reach a line of the Chigorin Defence that is not part of my repertoire. Instead my recommendation of 2.d5! is very challenging and forces Black to choose between a dangerous position after 5...fxe6 and a passive endgame if 5...dxe6.

Index of Variations

Chapter 1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 c5 5.♗xb4 cxb4 6.♗g2
A) 6...d5 14
B) 6...0–0 7.e4 d6 8.♘e2 15
B1) 8...♘c6 15
B2) 8...e5 9.a3 16
B21) 9...♘a6 17
B22) 9...♕b6 18

Chapter 2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♗xd2† 5.♕xd2
A) 5...0–0 6.♗g2 d6 20
B) 5...d5 6.♘f3 0–0 7.♗g2 21
B1) 7...♕e7 22
B11) 8...dxc4 22
B12) 8...b6 23
B13) 8...♖d8 24
B2) 7...♘bd7 8.0–0 25
B21) 8...dxc4 25
B22) 8...♕e7 26
B23) 8...c6 28

Chapter 3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 a5 5.♗g2
A) 5...d6 31
B) 5...0–0 31
C) 5...d5 6.♘f3 0–0 7.0–0 32
C1) 7...c6 33
C2) 7...♘c6 33

Chapter 4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4† 4.♗d2 ♕e7 5.♘f3
A) 5...b6 6.♗g2 ♗b7 7.0–0 37
A1) 7...0–0 37
A2) 7...♗xd2 8.♕xd2 39
A21) 8...d6 39
A22) 8...0–0 41

B) 5...0–0 6.♗g2 ♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 d6 8.♘c3 e5 9.0–0 43
B1) 9...♘c6 43
B2) 9...♗g4 44
B3) 9...♖e8 44
C) 5...♘c6 6.♘c3 45
C1) 6...d5 46
C2) 6...0–0 7.♗g2 48
C21) 7...d6 48
C22) 7...♘a5 49
C3) 6...♗xc3 7.♗xc3 ♘e4 8.♖c1 50
C31) 8...d6 50
C32) 8...0–0 9.♗g2 d6 10.d5 ♘d8 11.0–0 e5 12.♘d2 ♘xc3 13.♖xc3 53
C321) 13...b6 54
C322) 13...♗d7 55
C323) 13...f5 14.c5 ♘f7 15.♕b3 b6 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♕a3! 56
C3231) 17...♗b7 56
C3232) 17...e4 57
C3233) 17...a5 57

Chapter 5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘e4?! 4.a3
A) 4...b6 60
B) 4...♘c6 62
C) 4...♕h4 63
D) 4...d6 64

Chapter 6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♘f3
A) 4...♗b4†?! 67
B) 4...♘c6 5.♗f4 ♗b4† 6.♘bd2 68
B1) 6...f6 68
B2) 6...♕e7 7.e3! ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.♗e2 71
B21) 9...d6 72
B22) 9...b6 74
B23) 9...♗xd2† 76
B24) 9...0–0 78
B25) 9...a5! 81
C) 4...♗c5 5.e3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 0–0 7.♗e2 ♘gxe5 8.♘xe5 ♘xe5 9.0–0 83
C1) 9...d6 84
C2) 9...a5 86
C3) 9...♖e8 86

Chapter 7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 b5
A) 6.e4!? ♘xe4 7.♕e2 ♕e7 8.♗g2 93
A1) 8...♘d6 94
A2) 8...f5! 94
B) 6.♘f3!? 95
B1) 6...♗b7 96
B2) 6...d6 7.e4 97
B21) 7...a6 98
B22) 7...b4N 100

Chapter 8

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 ♗d6 6.♘c3 0–0 7.♗g2
A) 7...♗e5 103
B) 7...♗c7 104
C) 7...♖e8 105

Chapter 9

1.d4 e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 d6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♘f3 ♗g7 7.g3 ♘e7 8.♗g2 0–0 9.0–0 a6 10.a4
A) 10...h6 110
B) 10...♘f5 111
C) 10...♘d7 111

Chapter 10

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♘c3 g6 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2
A) 7...e5 8.0–0 115
A1) 8...♘g4 115
A2) 8...♘a6 116
A3) 8...♘e8 117
A4) 8...♘h5 118
B) 7...♘a6 8.0–0 ♘c7 9.a4 119
B1) 9...♘a6 120
B2) 9...♖b8 10.e4 121
B21) 10...b6 121
B22) 10...♗g4 124

Chapter 11

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4

A) 5...g6 6.♗e2 127
A1) 6...♘bd7 128
A2) 6...a6 128
A3) 6...♗g7 129
B) 5...♘bd7 6.♗d3 131
B1) 6...g6 131
B2) 6...♗e7 7.♘ge2 132
B21) 7...g6 132
B22) 7...h5 133
B23) 7...♘f8 134
B24) 7...0–0 135
C) 5...♗e7 6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2 136
C1) 7...♘a6 137
C2) 7...♘e8 137
C3) 7...♘bd7 8.♘ge2 139
C31) 8...♘e8 139
C2) 7...♘e8
C3) 7...♘bd7 8.♘ge2
C31) 8...♘e8
C32) 8...a6

Chapter 12

1.d4 c5 2.d5

A) 2...b5 145
B) 2...f5 147
C) 2...e5 3.e4 d6 4.♗b5†!? 149
C1) 4...♗d7 5.a4! 149
C11) 5...g6 150
C12) 5...♗e7 151
C2) 4...♘d7 151
D) 2...e6 3.♘c3 154
D1) 3...♘f6 4.e4 d6 5.♗b5†!? 155
D11) 5...♘bd7?! 155
D12) 5...♗d7 156
D2) 3...d6 4.e4 158
D21) 4...exd5 5.♘xd5 ♘f6 6.♘f3 158
D211) 6...♘xd5 158
D212) 6...♗e7 160
D22) 4...a6 160
D3) 3...exd5 162

Chapter 13

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.g3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0–0 9.0–0

A) 9...♗g4 166
B) 9...b6 167
C) 9...♖e8 10.♘d2 169
C1) 10...♘g4 169
C2) 10...b6 169
D) 9...a6 170
E) 9...♕e7 173
F) 9...♘a6 10.h3 175
F1) 10...♗d7 176
F2) 10...♖e8 177
F3) 10...♘c7 178
G) 9...♘bd7 10.a4! ♖e8 11.♘d2 a6 12.h3 179
G1) 12...♘h5 13.♘ce4 181
G2) 12...♖b8 13.♘c4 182
G21) 13...♘b6 14.♘a3 ♗d7 15.e4 182
G211) 15...♘c8 184
G212) 15...♕c7 185
G22) 13...♘e5 14.♘a3 186
G221) 14...♕c7?! 187
G223) 14...♗d7 188
G224) 14...♘h5 15.e4 189
G2241) 15...♗d7 189
G2242)15...♖f8 16.♔h2 192
G22421) 16...♗d7 193
G22422) 16...f5 194
G2243) 15...f5 196

Chapter 14

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5

A) 4...e6 202
B) 4...a6 5.bxa6 203
B1) 5...♗xa6 203
B2) 5...e6 204
B3) 5...g6 6.♘c3 ♗xa6 7.g3 d6 8.♗g2 ♗g7 9.♘f3 206
B31) 9...♘fd7!? 206
B32) 9...♘bd7 10.♖b1! 208
B321) 10...♘b6 209
B322) 10...0–0 11.0–0 210
B3221) 11...♘b6 211
B3222) 11...♘e8 212

B3223) 11...♕a5 12.♗d2 213
B32231) 12...♘g4 214
B32232) 12...♖fb8 13.♕c2 215
B322321) 13...♕c7 216
B322322) 13...♘e8 217
B322323) 13...♘g4 217

Chapter 15

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 d5 5.0–0
A) 5...♗e7 6.c4 0–0 7.♘bd2 222
A1) 7...♘c6 222
A2) 7...c6 8.♘e5 223
A21) 8...b6 224
A22) 8...♗d7 225
A23) 8...♘bd7 225
B) 5...♗d6 6.c4 c6 7.♘c3 0–0 8.♕c2 227
B1) 8...♕e7 229
B2) 8...♗d7 229
B3) 8...♕e8 230
B4) 8...♘e4 9.♖b1 233
B41) 9...♗d7 233
B42) 9...♘d7 10.b4 234
B421) 10...♘df6 234
B422) 10..b5!? 235
B43) 9...a5 236
B44) 9...♕e7 10.b4 239
B441) 10...♗xb4 239
B442) 10...♘d7 240
B443) 10...♗d7 241
B444) 10...b5 241

Chapter 16

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.c4 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0–0 6.0–0
A) 6...♕e8 244
B) 6...♘e4 245
C) 6...d6 7.♘c3 246
C1) 7...♘c6!? 246
C2) 7...a5 8.b3 249
C21) 8...♘a6 249
C22) 8...♘e4 249
C3) 7...♘e4 8.♘xe4 fxe4 9.♘d2 d5 10.f3! 251
C31) 10...exf3 252

C32) 10...♘c6 252
C4) 7...♕e8 8.b3 253
C41) 8...♘c6 253
C42) 8...♘bd7 254
C43) 8...c6 255
C44) 8...♕h5 255
C45) 8...a5 9.♗b2 256
C451) 9...♘c6 257
C452) 9...♕h5 257
C453) 9...c6 258
C454) 9...♘a6 259

Chapter 17

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.0–0 0–0 6.b3
A) 6...c5 263
B) 6...d6 7.♗b2 265
B1) 7...a5 265
B2) 7...e6 266
B3) 7...c6 267
B4) 7...♘e4 8.♘bd2 ♘xd2 9.♕xd2 270
B41) 9...♘d7 271
B42) 9...♘c6 272
B5) 7...e5?! 273
B6) 7...h6 275
B7) 7...♘c6 276
B8) 7...♕e8 8.c4 278
B81) 8...e5 9.dxe5 278
B811) 9...♘g4 278
B812) 9...♘fd7 279
B82) 8...♘c6 280
B83) 8...♘e4 281
B84) 8...♘a6 9.♕c2!? 282
B841) 9...h6 284
B842) 9...♘b4 285
B843) 9...♖b8 286

Chapter 18

1.d4 g6 2.c4
A) 2...f5 3.h4! 290
A1) 3...♗g7 290
A2) 3...♘f6 291
B) 2...♗g7 292

Chapter 19

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♘f3
A) 6...c5 298
B) 6...0–0 7.0–0 299
B1) 7...♘c6 300
B2) 7...c6 302
B3) 7...♘a6 8.♘c3 303
B31) 8...♘xc3 304
B32) 8...♗e6 304
B33) 8...♘b6 305
B34) 8...c5 306
B4) 7...c5 8.e4 308
B41) 8...♘b6 9.d5 e6 10.♘c3 exd5 11.exd5 308
B411) 11...♗f5 309
B412) 11...♘c4 310
B42) 8...♘f6 9.e5 ♘d5 10.dxc5 311
B421) 10...♘c6 311
B422) 10...♘b4 312
B423) 10...♘a6 313
C) 6... ♘b6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.e3 315
C1) 8...e5 9.d5 315
C11) 9...♘e7 10.e4 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 c6 13.0–0 315
C111) 13...cxd5 316
C112) 13...0–0 318
C12) 9...♘b4 10.e4 c6 11.a3 ♘a6 12.0–0 cxd5 13.♘xd5!?N 319
C121) 13...0–0 320
C122) 13...♘xd5 320
C13) 9...♘a5 10.0–0 0–0 11.e4 c6 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗e3 321
C131) 13...♘bc4 321
C132) 13...cxd5 14.♗xb6! 322
C1321) 14...axb6 323
C1322) 14...♕xb6 324
C2) 8...0–0 9.0–0 325
C21) 9...e5 326
C22) 9...a5 328
C23) 9...♖e8 10.♖e1!? 328
C231) 10...h6!? 329
C232) 10...♗d7 330
C233) 10...a5!? 331
C234) 10...e5 11.d5 332
C2341) 11...♘e7 332
C2342) 11...♘a5 12.e4 c6 13.b3!? cxd5 14.exd5 333
C23421) 14...e4 334
C23422) 14...♗g4 335

Chapter 20

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.b3 ♗g7 6.♗g2

A) 6...dxc4 338
B) 6...0–0 7.0–0 339
B1) 7...♗e6 340
B2) 7...c5 341
B3) 7...♘e4 8.♗b2 342
B31) 8...dxc4 342
B32) 8...♗e6 342
B33) 8...♘d7 344
B4) 7...♗f5 8.♗b2 345
B41) 8...♘bd7 345
B42) 8...♕c8 345
B43) 8...♘e4 346
B5) 7...♘bd7 348
B6) 7...a5 8.♘c3 ♘e4 9.♗b2 349
B61) 9...♘xc3 10.♗xc3 350
B611) 10...b5 350
B612) 10...♘d7 350
B613) 10...a4 351
B614) 10...♗f5 11.e3 ♘d7 12.♕e2 351
B6141) 12...a4 352
B6142) 12...♗e4 352
B6143) 12...♘f6 353
B62) 9...♗f5 354
B7) 7...dxc4 8.bxc4 c5 9.♗b2 357
B71) 9...♕b6 357
B72) 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4 358
B721) 10...♘g4 359
B722) 10...♘c6!? 360
B723) 10...♕b6 11.♕b3 361
B7231) 11...♘bd7 361
B7232) 11...♘fd7 12.e3 362
B72321) 12...♘c5 362
B72322) 12...♘a6 363
B72323) 12...♘c6 364

Chapter 21

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.h3

Chapter 22

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♗g4 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2 c5 10.♕c2

A) 10...♕d7 372
B) 10...e5 373
C) 10...a6 11.h3 ♗d7 12.b3 b5 13.♗b2 ♖b8 14.♖ab1 375
C1) 14...bxc4 375
C2) 14...♕c7 376
C3) 14...e5 377

Chapter 23

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♗f5 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2

A) 9...c6 380
B) 9...c5 381

Chapter 24

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 e5 8.d5 ♘e7 9.e4

A) 9...c5 10.♘e1 ♘e8 11.♘d3 f5 12.f4 exf4 13.♗xf4 389
A1) 13...fxe4 389
A2) 13...♗d4† 390
B) 9...a5 391
C) 9...h6 391
D) 9...♘d7 393
E) 9...♘e8 10.♘e1 f5 11.♘d3 ♘f6 12.♗g5! 395
E1) 12...fxe4 395
E2) 12...h6 13.♗xf6 396
E21) 13...♗xf6 397
E22) 13...♖xf6 398

Chapter 25

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 a6 8.♕d3

A) 8...♘d7 401
B) 8...♖b8 404
C) 8...♘b4 405
D) 8...♗d7 406
E) 8...♗f5 407
F) 8...e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♕xd8 ♖xd8 11.♗g5 408
F1) 11...♖e8 409
F2) 11...♗e6 12.♘d2 h6 13.♗xf6 410
F21) 13...♖xd2 411
F22) 13...♗xf6 412

Chapter 26

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d6 5.♘c3 0–0 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0–0 ♖b8 8.h3
A) 8...e5 415
B) 8...♗f5 415
C) 8...a6 9.e4 416
C1) 9...e5 416
C2) 9...♘a5 417
C3) 9...♘d7 418
C4) 9...b5 10.cxb5 axb5 11.♖e1!? 419
C41) 11...♘d7 420
C42) 11...e5 421
C43) 11...b4 422
C44) 11...e6 424

Chapter 27

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 c6 7.0–0
A) 7...♘a6 427
B) 7...♕b6 430
C) 7...♗f5 8.♘e1 432
C1) 8...e5 434
C2) 8...♗e6 436
D) 7...a6 437
E) 7...♗g4 440
F) 7...♕a5 8.e4 440
F1) 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3 441
F11) 10...♘bd7 441
F12) 10...♘fd7 442
F13) 10...e5 445
F2) 8...♕h5 445
F3) 8...e5 9.h3 448
F31) 9...exd4 449
F32) 9...♘bd7 10.♖e1 451
F321) 10...♖e8 452
F322) 10...exd4 454

Chapter 28

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4
A) 8...a6 462
B) 8...h6 466
C) 8...exd4 9.♘xd4 467
C1) 9...c6 468
C2) 9...♖e8 10.h3 469

C21) 10...a6 470
C22) 10...♘c5 11.♖e1 475
C221) 11...c6 475
C222) 11...a5 477
C223) 11...♗d7 12.♔h2!? 479
C2231) 12...h6 480
C2232) 12...a6 482
D) 8...c6 9.h3 483
D1) 9...a6 484
D2) 9...♖e8 485

Chapter 29

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5 8.e4 c6 9.h3 ♕b6 10.♖e1

A) 10...♖e8 491
B) 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 493
B1) 11...♖e8 12.♖e2!? 494
B11) 12...♘xe4 494
B12) 12...♘g4 495
B13) 12...♕b4 497
B2) 11...♘g4 498
B3) 11…♘e8 498

Chapter 30

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♗g4 3.c4

A) 3...c6 502
B) 3...g6 502
C) 3...♘f6 505
D) 3...♗xf3 4.exf3 509
D1) 4...g6 510
D2) 4...c6 511
E) 3...♘d7 4.♘c3 515
E1) 4...♗xf3 515
E2) 4…e5 5.g3 516
E21) 5...♘gf6 516
E22) 5..♗xf3 518

Chapter 31

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.g3
A) 4...♘c6 522
B) 4...c5 5.d5 b5 6.cxb5 522
B1) 6...a6 522
B2) 6...♕a5† 524
C) 4...e5 5.♘c3 524
C1) 5...♗g4 525
C2) 5...♘c6 526
C3) 5...exd4 528
C4) 5...♘d7 6.♗g2 530
C41) 6...♘h6 530
C42) 6...♘e7 7.0–0 0–0 8.e4 exd4 9.♘xd4 ♘c6 10.♘de2 531
C421) 10...♘de5 534
C422) 10...♘c5 535
C423) 10...a5 535

Chapter 32

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.f3!?
A) 3...e6 539
B) 3...♘c6 540

Chapter 33

1.d4
A) 1...b5 543
B) 1...a6 545
C) 1...c6 2.c4 b5 548
D) 1...b6 550

Chapter 34

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 ♗b7 4.♗d3
A) 4...♘f6 557
B) 4...♗b4† 558
C) 4...♘c6 560
D) 4...f5 5.exf5 565
D1) 5...♗xg2?! 565
D2) 5...♗b4† 6.♔f1 567
D21) 6...exf5 568
D22) 6...♘f6 568

Chapter 35

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘f3

A) 3...d6 573
B) 3...e6 575

Chapter 36

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘f3 ♘bd7 4.♘c3 e5 5.g3 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0–0 7.0–0

A) 7...♖e8 579
B) 7...exd4 581
C) 7...c6 8.e4 ♖e8 9.h3 a6 10.a4! a5 11.♗e3 583
C1) 11...♗f8 584
C2) 11...exd4 586

Chapter 37

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2

Chapter 38

1.d4

A) 1...e5?! 594
B) 1...♘c6 2.d5 ♘e5 3.e4 e6 4.f4 ♘g6 5.dxe6 596
B1) 5...fxe6 597
B2) 5...dxe6 599

Playing the Queen's Gambit

Grandmaster Lars Schandorff

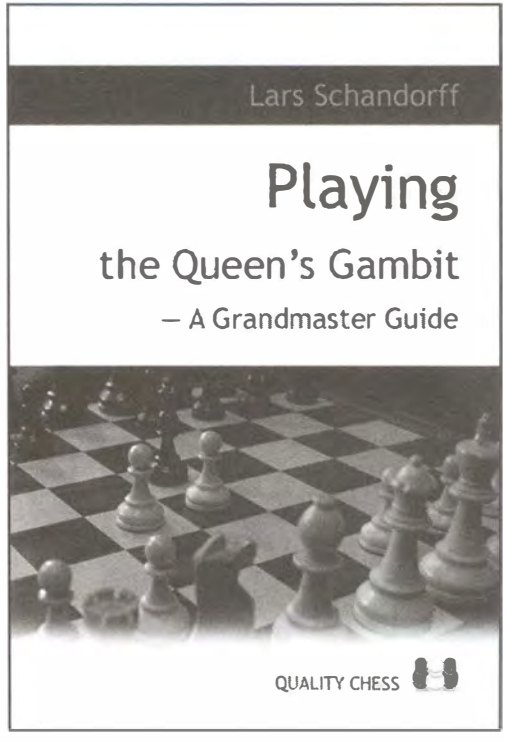
The power of the Queen's Gambit is beyond question, even though it allows some serious defences - the Slav and Semi-Slav are favoured by the elite, Kasparov was playing the Queen's Gambit Accepted until he retired, and the Queen's Gambit Declined has been trusted for a century.

The principled way for White to build a repertoire after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 is to play the critical main lines. Take as much space as possible – no compromises. That is Lars Schandorff's attitude and so his choice is clear:

* **5.♗g5** against the Semi-Slav
* **6.♘e5** versus the **5...♗f5** main line Slav
* **3.e4** against the Queen's Gambit Accepted
* The Exchange Variation versus the Queen's Gambit Declined
* **5.c5** against the **4...a6**-Slav

The Tarrasch, Chigorin, Albin and all minor lines are also met with the same vigour - this is a complete White repertoire after **1.d4 d5 2.c4.**

Grandmaster Lars Schandorff from Denmark is renowned on the international circuit for the depth of his opening preparation.



Grandmaster Repertoire

An update to a Classic Concept

Creating the Grandmaster Repertoire series seemed a natural idea. There has been a glut of opening books offering simplistic coverage of a subject. Apart from a few exceptions, it almost seemed like the concept of a high-level repertoire book had been forgotten. As chess players and fans, we felt we were missing out, and because we can, we decided to do something about it.

The books in the Grandmaster Repertoire series are written by grandmasters, edited by grandmasters, and will certainly be read by grandmasters. Of course, this does not mean that players who are not grandmasters cannot benefit from them. We have worked hard to make our books clear in their presentation and to make it possible for the readers to decide the depth to which they want to study them.

It is our conviction that most players will eventually enjoy greater success by playing the main lines, simply because they are, in most cases, based on stronger moves. Instinctively most players know this, but for one reason or another they employ easy-to-learn but unambitious systems, or dubious gambits. These approaches may yield success from time to time, but we would argue that they are less conducive to a player's overall development.

In these days of multi-million game databases, we all have access to information. The difficulty comes from trying to navigate through the ever-expanding jungle of games and variations. In this groundbreaking new series, readers will be guided by the insights of grandmasters, each chosen for their special expertise in the opening in question.

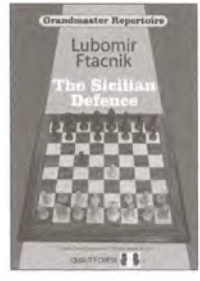
We are immensely excited about this new series, and we hope that the readers will share our enthusiasm.











GAMES/CHESS



Grandmaster Repertoire

Boris Avrukh
1.d4 VOLUME TWO

Grandmaster Repertoire is a new series of high quality books based on the main lines, written by strong grandmasters. The aim is to provide the reader with a complete repertoire at a level good enough for elite tournaments, and certainly also for the club championship.

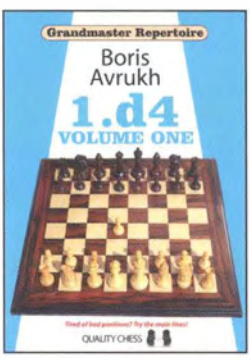
Grandmaster Repertoire provides a repertoire to last a lifetime.

Top GM Boris Avrukh charts a course towards an advantage with 1.d4. Avrukh is used to facing the best players in the world. In this book he presents an improved version of the repertoire that elevated him to the top 50, focussing on main lines with a kingside fianchetto.

1.d4 Volume Two covers the King's Indian, Dutch, Grünfeld, various Benonis, Benko, Budapest and other minor systems.

- *Critical lines explained by an expert*
- *Hundreds of novelties*
- *Busts many recommended lines*
- *A repertoire to last a lifetime*

Boris Avrukh is a grandmaster from Israel. He is an Olympiad gold medallist, former World Junior Champion and analysis partner of World Championship finalists.



Also available

€29.99 $34.95

ISBN: 978-1-906552-33-6

9 781906 552336 53495

QUALITY CHESS

www.qualitychess.co.uk